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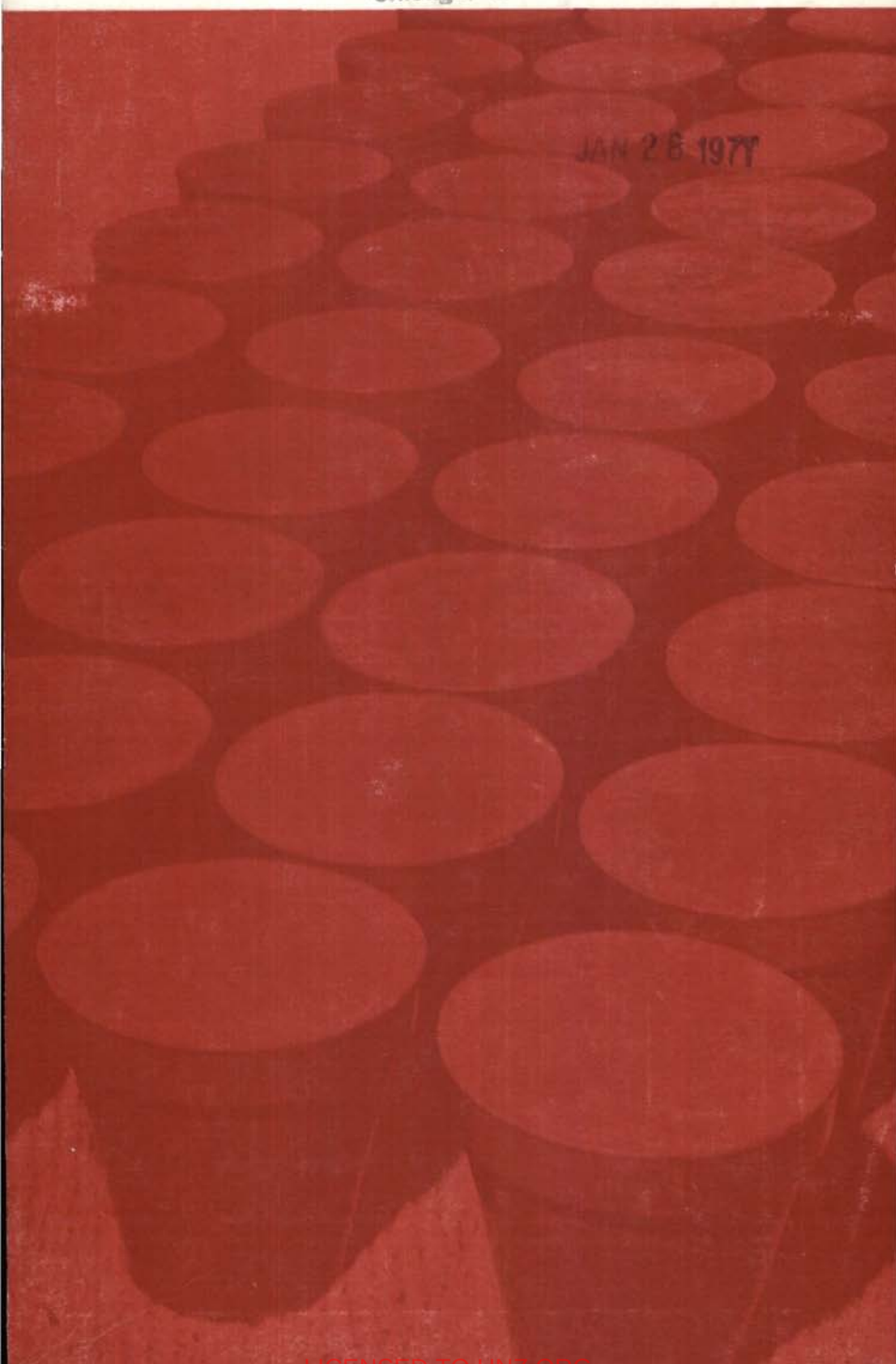

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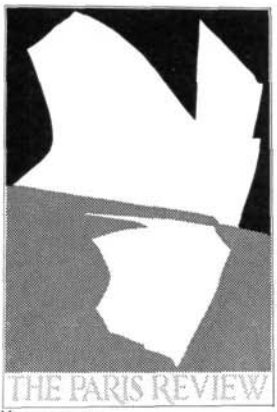

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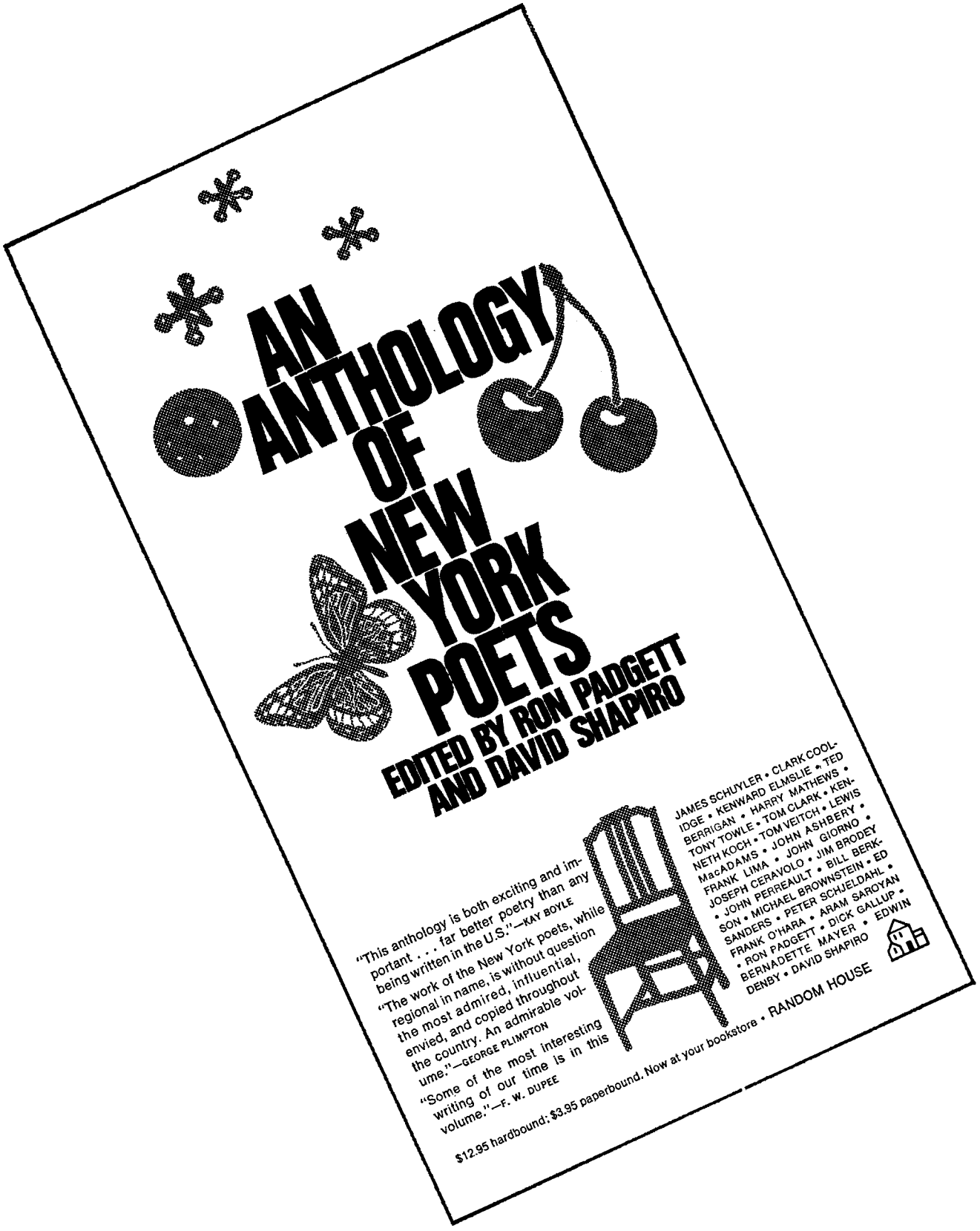
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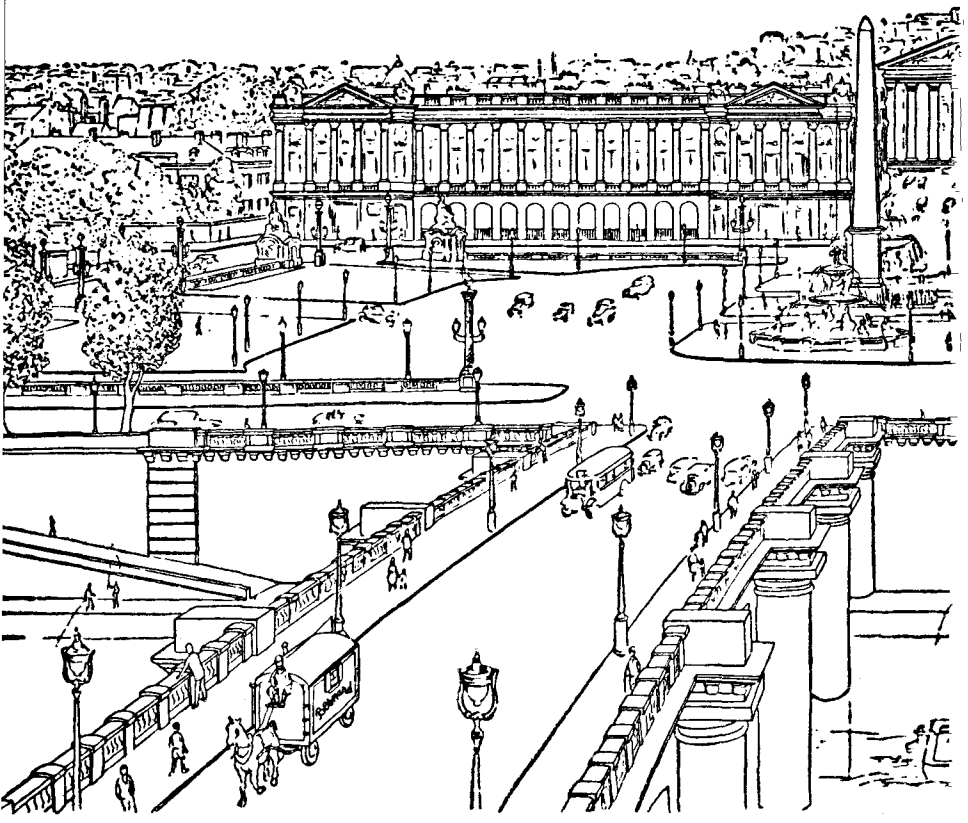

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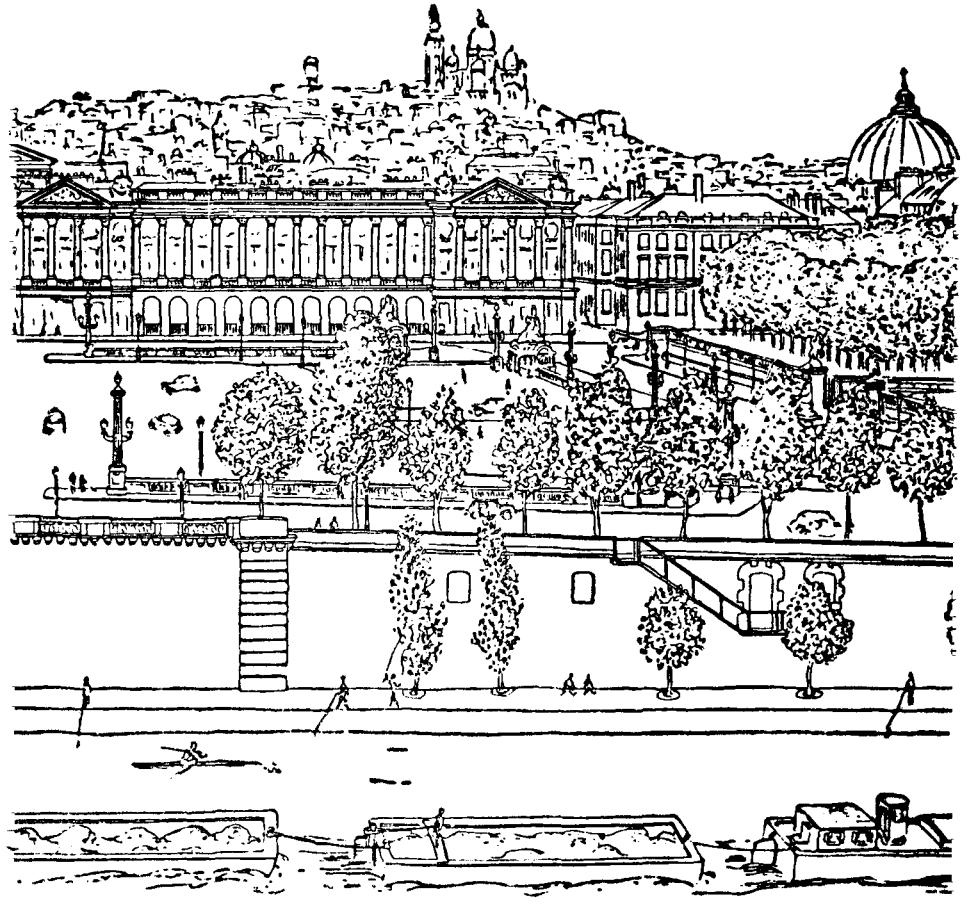

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Bill Berkson

Pulsing

Bands of distracted emotions snap getting
wider as daytime colors sink and roll on their
sides. White powders smashed tight into
regular tabs. It might be time to take one
of those, meaning, I guess, "Should I?"
So that, doing it, this rainbow is achieved,
thin bands in arcs of those very same colors.

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Negative

The door. If you pull it it's heavy; if you push it it's hard. This push-pull contest continues until the restaurant closes and the streets are empty of all but a few passers-by. You are left wondering if just holding it wouldn't involve exactly the same level of force.

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Dick Gallup

Bailing Rags

I breathe the noxious air because it is there
Set free at the last moment
a green cloth folds
over and over
In the wind I follow
And like it I am lost in the dark traffic
Rails glinting in the ovoid sun
Sinking over claptrap shacks
It looks good to eat a banana
when you are hungry
But thinking of the lush atmosphere
As a personal triumph over starvation
Is maniacal
And leads directly to the looney bin

Soft mermaid hair in the tarantula grass
Steaming water
Dream litoral of the concrete and tarred streets
Leading across town

Bailing rags out back
Away from the boiler
and
the presses of lucifer

A faint rattle of ticks
Over the vast rumbling of giant machinery
Braintree terminal
The frozen battery of pumps
At the side of highway double-ought
Flashing red scraps of flannel
Decomposing in a sump up country

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Stand in
For the yellow room
Cotterpins and helical shavings
Dirty stentorian troubador on the extermination range

Pages of cloth made from fruit fiber fill the mouths of mud ducks
Making a stand for the tag ends
The loose strings of nature's hegemony

Blades of burnished grass saw in the wind
Over these points
Busted hot-boxes with the velvet screws undone
The truck set up against the governor
Kansas highball blues
Rural small town traffic light
red to orange to green
with a grimy drawn out click
Pay up day
Comes in hesitant blue slacks
Smiles with that I got you stripper smile
Swollen prick dates
Soft swelling beer swill

Bummer
dry-run freedom

Expressions change

Years explode

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Jim Carroll

Prell

Day changes from cannon to morning glory
her body dances death dances in the prell light

beads strung out all through Japan's public parks, my head,
light green eyes of the birds that break branches to build
homes there.

she tore the page, "Varieties of Emeralds"
from little sister's picture encyclopedia.

I watched this all with a spike in my vein from a top floor
window
I felt the blood pass from my arm into the glass tube above
it...

then it was rainy bonsai everywhere for me
and black masses across my brain like planets on solar maps

paper secrets I used to believe lined the open closet shelves
her body split and floated into the air forests like astral
monkeys.

It's there, the air the body the soft green day:
your life cutting through the light noise of New York City's
traffic dawn.

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The Orchid Stories

Kenward Elmslie

MOON CANAL MORNING I

The Advent of the Hooded Figure

I closed my eyes and saw a thought cube vision:

limousine on a dead-end road
with chauffeur standing besid
e it scanning a tree-top nerv
ously or is he merely scanni
ng a dirigible (hein hein) sk
y ads with great brand names
slanted towards the sun: one
touch of darkness—delicate
black lines like tendrils in a
tropical vine tactfully hidden
behind a luxuriously appointed
mobile home in the slow-lane
rumble-seat Ch-Wa-Wa midge

"—vetoed the idea, but I do have permission to embark on a new project—performances of a personality envelope builder-upper—'*Moon Canal Morning*' compiled by Dr. Schmidlapp's second wife, Gertrud! To really put it on the

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map, I've thought of a three-pronged plan, hein hein! First prong: full-page ads in medical journals showing doctors and nurses attending a performance, along with—"

Barry Wingate walked out of the tunnel. He stopped in front of the barn across the lawn and took his windbreaker off. He began feeding dried corn ears into a machine. Kernels of corn spewed into a pail, making clattery noises. The shorn ears dropped into a gunnysack attached to the side of the barn.

A hooded figure peeked around the corner of the barn. The figure straightened up, and inched along the side of the barn, keeping to the morning shadows. The hooded figure stood, flattened against the barn, surveying Barry's back. The hooded figure lit up a cigarette. Curls of smoke drifted up.

INFO:

Barry Wingate kept putting off our expedition to Venezuela to hunt for orchids—main reason I came to Texas in first place. Slight quandary—how to "round-the-leaf" (organic life and personality, yin-yang balance of sexual in-go and out-go plus cerebration so not get lost in shuffle of moment-to-moment shifts) if I'm on tenterhooks re orchid expedition. No overt sex frustrating too. What's Barry's story? Flirts, repels, girlfriend talk, Tex-Mex sex braggadocio—bartender, bartender's sister—he's in middle. And now my childhood sweetheart Diana "Vienna" is on the phone.

The Take Off

"—basic Norwegian, aided by Helga, who is—hein, hein—the first and ex-Mrs. Schmidlapp. I've had a go at the translation. In fact, I'll read it out-loud to you right now. My translation is in a valise propped against my chair. Now I'm unzipping it! Taking translation out! Just touching it makes me feel good all over. Now—I've opened the translation to page

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one. Hope you're as excited as I am, hein, hein, hein. Excuse me, I have to freshen my coffee—"

I heard Diana "Vienna" put down her receiver. Just like old times, listening to her voice as she read the steam: adolescence. I succumbed to "trap-door-itis"—(overhead)—i.e.—nostalgia for orchid attic back home—

Wisps. Streaks. Puffing up. Laser vibrations constricted on my thumbnail. Instant intensity! Circles in assorted colors widen—steady flow. Hurts my eyes. Circles widen. Streaming out of my thumb. My thumb isn't my usual thumb. My thumb is evidently energy source—must sabotage laser vibration circles—fanning out over the trees. Put my thumb in my mouth pressing edge of nail against roof of mouth hard. Great lungings and wheelings well up! Swallow! Happy throbbings! Echoed grunts of pleasure! Hein! They quicken. They connect. Dribbles of sound spinning around me like ectoplasm goobers. Fan out. Bump against obstacle. "Scuse." Screamy though: "scuse." SCUSE! Streaks start to get tangled. *In* me! Matted. Open my mouth—out they lunge. Turn into sound dribbles that start to come from someone else. Dribbles puff up, into scream. Solid scream, not on and off or it dies down. Keeps replenishing itself effortlessly. Like sitting in a tepid bath. Watching redden and darken. What redden and darken? Water redden and darken. In the water:

streaks wisps "linear essentials"
wingless gray insects 1/8 inch
tanks had wonderful thrip
semi-transparent a—
pierces tissues

spittoon license plates eye-shaped window
reflected in it me in tub of water red
water keeps replenishing itself so
effortlessly how nice for
the scream to change
into my bath

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sitting in a tepid bath watching water redden and darken
only to realize one is peeing out pleasantly
a never-ending supply of one's own life-
blood big chunks of City
Foam autombol
FOU

Son of Thunder Story

As near as I can estimate it, judging from notes on scratch-pads, transitory image reconstructions, fold-ins, etc.—it was 9:22 when Barry took off his shirt and hung it on the corn machine. He seemed to be oblivious to the hooded figure, still smoking and surveying his back, judging from the position of the cowl. I assumed it was some friend or relation, playing some kind of prank on him. Actually, I was more engrossed in comparing Barry's back tan to his front tan in the portrait of him directly under the clock (9:22) on the bedroom wall; today's portrait showed him soaping himself in his shower, mouth wide open as if really singing out—Barry in a good mood. His lashes were partly stuck together by the rivulets of water coursing down and were lowered, as if a photographer had caught him blinking. Mrs. Tyler was in the portrait too, bringing him a tray of food: scrambled eggs, sausages, orange juice, piping hot cup of some beverage, and on her shoulder, the parrot, ruffling its feathers in anger at the shower spray.

Barry took off his shirt, and hung it on the corn machine. The hooded figure was still smoking and surveying his back, judging from the position of the cowl. Barry's back was much tanner than his front in the portrait.

Something about Barry's back reminded me of Harry Black, a taxi driver who'd driven us past great cactus phenomena in the dawn, followed by great blue silos in the distance (hydro-farms) the day of my arrival in Texas. While Barry

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and I had dozed in the back seat, Harry Black's voice had woven soothingly in and out of my mirage fold-ins and color scrambles as we zoomed along:

Blue silo.	"went to Fort L"
Blue silo.	"ex-Zep chum"
Blue silo.	"suck dicks"
Blue silo.	"guy down tunnel"
Blue silo.	"glory-hole buggery"
Blue silo.	"looked through hole"
Blue silo.	"Cal, old Cal"
Blue silo.	"drove me home"
Blue silo.	"be a threesome"
Blue silo.	"come in, buddyboy"
Blue silo.	"head back to Chi"
Blue silo.	"TV in my apartment"
Blue silo.	"shoe squashes something'
Blue silo.	"hypo...climb in"
Blue silo.	"take off my duds"
Blue silo.	"john door opens"
Blue silo.	"Fat Mountain Woman"
Blue silo.	"hikes up skirts"
Blue silo.	"wal if it ain't—"
Blue silo.	"—SON OF THUNDER"

Hard to marshal the facts, but then I do have notes on scratch pads, transitory image reconstructions, plus one copy of Diana "Vienna's" translation.

Anyway, it was 9:22 when Barry took off his shirt and hung it on the corn machine. The hooded figure was smoking and surveying his back. Blue Silo.

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'Moon Canal Morning'

Diana "Vienna" read it in a very even voice. Here goes. First, footsteps get louder in receiver. Breathing sound. Sipping. Gulp. "Hein, hein." Barry moves back from hooded figure—stand at arm's length—like lovers in an operetta. Diana "Vienna" clears throat:

> "Chime doorbell, bong bong bong—slam of door from above. Ladies' voices. Steps on the stair. Someone stumbles. Mutual laughter. Ah, Helga is discovered by a washing machine. Helga is a sparrow with bits of eyebrow pencils in her nest, a stick to buff her nails, round gaily-colored penny candies. She is familiar with ancient winters. It doesn't alarm her how the foxes are gnawing at the bones in the spring—victuals. The bones of her procedure—malicious, a malicious Prussian way of saying yes so that you feel like a serf, with no code of honor. Soon the cosmos will pass through a sapphire bath and in that Blue Future, Gertrud will be a tower of lavender ice, glittering like diamonds in a monument of newer ice that protects the Gertrud Tower from hot bird saliva and bird droppings and bird tears and bird sweat. Gertrud holds out her hand. Helga laughs and takes Gertrud's hand with a must-we-be-so-formal shooting up of her eyebrows. Helga pecks Gertrud on the cheek, pumping her hand up and down anxiously. Loud BZZZ. BZZZZZZZZZ. Gertrud doubles over with whoop whoop whoop whoop: stomach cramp position."

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Steel-blue Claw in the Harbor

Gertrud: Whoop whoop whoop! Here, Helga—let me show you my wolf ring.

Helga: Yes, I think a little Mozart would be *most* soothing.

Gertrud: Wolf ring I said—wolf *ring*. It has ruby eyes, see, genuine ivory fangs, a malachite tongue, sterling silver fur, chased. It's hollow! My wedding ring. Bend down close so you can inculcate the fangs.

Helga: What's this? Amusement death? Amusement death?

Gertrud: Amusement death? Amusement death? I'll have you know I'm happily married. Yes, to your ex-husband, yes. Our life together, this home—amusement death? Bend down, Helga!

Helga: I thought—this luncheon—this basement is frightening me.

Gertrud: Bend down instantly!

Helga: If you say so.

Gertrud: I do say so.

Helga: This horrible liquid coming out of your ring. Did it not come up—hola! My Algerian politico! My customary saunter. I found myself in a blue desert, resting on a pink rock. Fellatio! The hogs in that grass-roofed market. The gutters! My shoes...the plane to Zurich left with no me aboard. A thin needle of silver could be seen arising in the distant black mountains. The invaders were waiting to pounce on our defenseless city. Striped straws were jutting out of the sand. An old-fashioned color

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scramble! A camel sat down. It was pierced. Drained. Saggy humps, some fur left to bake in the blue desert. How frolicsome the French girls seemed on the beach of the dinky suburb, tumbling down the dunes, clambering back up. Hola! A silver needle rose out of the surf. The girls lay down in a circle and told lovely spectre stories. They slept, their black lashes fluttering as they dreamt, much as the legs of racing dogs twitch as they see (a dream scramble) grandstand vacationers (ochre to puce)—flamingo legs (terra cotta to khaki)—pennants (mustard to olive drab). The straws, hola! Too late. Poor limp things. What is the custom? Should I—about burial—the skins might blow away—notify the proper—I'm in the station: camel, dunes, girls. They laugh! The Sergeant indulges in *louche* raillery —down to business. He hands me the business card of a rich Brazilian, a Mr. Chicago Honduras—a mint tea with him at midnight—that is all that is required of me, and I will be exonerated. Exonerated? Hola! Chicago's terra cotta lips disgust me. I run to the hotel. So little call for my glass paintings of city fires and holocausts. Too much of the real thing all around. And so little food! Resentment of us mixed bloods. The manager thrust the door open. I was in my scanties. Take my shoes to be cleaned, there's a good man. Telegram, madam. Telegram for me? My politico says: join me. A famous city, begins with a—a—hola, a Z, a Z. Champagne? A celebration is in order, but perhaps you could inform me, those needles on the rooftops glittering in the sun, outside the window—. He lies down on my bed. Nosebleed. Straws, straws, smashing the windows... woozy...do something, I shouted! The steel-blue claw in the harbor, liberation! Sand flies at dusk, I thought as I came to. No, it was the injection, given me by the kindly hooded person. The first words I said were: *music by candlelight.*

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Gertrud: I'm afraid we have neither candles nor music for this luncheon festivity. Let's eat! I'm starved! I cannot, absolutely cannot comprehend in regards to you.

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Barry has shifted his position: profile silhouetted against the white barn. Hooded figure's right hand brushes Barry's chest with fingertips—rainbow arch stuff. Left hand continues upside-down T motion. Right hand makes horizontal Figure 8—takes curves like skater slanting to keep balance. 8 is sideways, so that each nipple is at center of each of the circles of the 8. Whirling motion in hollow of stomach button, like corkscrew driving in. Then fast zigzag up to throat. Pokes Adam's apple like hunt-and-peck typist who finds "8".

Small Thought Cube Vision:
Roofs

wending its
way past v
ast factory
roofs with
great brand
names slant

Repeat of sequence: 8, stomach button whirl, zigzag, poke. Left hand toys with belt. Fingers move like crab scrabbling.

Wouldn't mind if Gertrud and Helga were feeding each other bananas. Their hair could be up in plastic pink curlers—they could be listening to records, in a Barry-and-me intimate way—identical as duos, hein hein. We wait on table at a teashop frequented by widows with a predilection for the Occult. Thing is, it's Saturday, and the washing machine is on the blink, with our dotted Swiss print frocks in it, and our boyfriends, Hal and Mack, who work in a garage in the next town, are expected to come by to pick us up for a drive in an old-fashioned electric automobile. Gertrud isn't susceptible to

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accident vertigo, but I am. Mrs. Thurber, the owner of the car, has gone to the seaside for some sun, but she's given us permission to use it in her absence. Bong bong bong. They're here, Gertrud says. What'll we do? Gertrud and Helga get the giggles at this. They let the boys in. Behave, Gertrud says. They explain their predicament. We need those print frocks to go dancing! Hal and Mack volunteer to fix the washing machine—can't be too different from a regular car. Hal pokes his head in it and gets drenched. Sopping wet suit. Mack says, lemme at it. Gets sopping wet too. Gertrud's on the floor. She can't stop laughing—confesses she rewired it on purpose. My turn next—Hal and Mack can't keep a straight face: down they go. Let's get out of these wet things, Hal says, in a falsetto voice. Soon he's in his jockey-shorts. Gertrud has hysterics by now. The lights go out. Gertrud, Helga says. What does this mean, eh? Now we're in a heap on the floor, in the dark. What a tangle—arms, legs, breasts, hair, noses, lips, elbows—try as they may, they can't stop laughing.

Various Devices

Bit of a gap here. Good place to lump together some more info about devices essential to the progress of Gertrud's personality envelope builder-upper—'*Moon Canal Morning*'—plus some others that were highly instrumental in influencing me to leave Texas, start fresh, etc.

1) Wolf ring contraption.
   Inside ring is rubber syphon, leading to flesh-colored tube along hand and arm (under G's sleeve, I guess)—then up neck and into hairdo. Easy to conceal under a "bun." A container (very narrow tube, flattened out like old toothpaste receptacle) for the simulated blood can be pinned under artificial hair—braids would be very "Gertrud." Or hat. Hat optional, but if hat is

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worn, ought to be something about Gertrud wearing hat in basement—luncheon basement—to keep hairdo from dampness, or maybe something about her father and double pneumonia—died—heavy snowfall—car stalls on way to hosp.—G's mother always wore hat in house after his demise "because of draughts"—brain damage fear—cold spreads through body, worsens—

2) Pillow juicy fart sound regulator.
Set off by pressure on pillow. Pressure gauge flicks ribbon switch—ten seconds of sound as spool unwinds, then snaps automatically back to starter position.

3) Spider device.
Lever releases metal weight attached to wire. Pulls open stopper of smoke container in light fixture over participant. First, participant reaches for napkin, plastic tarantula scurries out, up arm, up onto hair—if all goes well. Timed to coincide with smoke effect—thinks hair's on fire—spider falls to floor—fifteen seconds—disintegrates.

Actually, meal never gets eaten in basement—comes out that Gertrud is just testing Helga—wants to enlist her in exposing Dr. Schmidlapp as charlatan—pills he gives them are debilitating and induce total physiological dependence.

4) Micro-Vox Pellet.
Fastened under hood—connected to phone system. Channel B allows person to answer me, then flip back to '*Moon Canal Morning*'—evidently pre-recorded.

5) Plastic Face.

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9 : 41

At last, action re Barry. Hooded figure's fingers stop crab-like scrabbling for shelter, edging into Barry's pants again and again, only to be rebuffed each time by a pouncy opponent—at least that's the impression I got. Fingers pounce, extricating the tongue of his belt from its buckle. The tongue of the belt is bent upwards by the forefinger and thumb until it probes Barry's stomach button hollow, gingerly. Human Touch! Mm!

Small Thought Cube Vision:
Moppet

finally inexpl
icably the hu
man touch a
rumble-seat o
pen with a m

Diana's voice raspy. Ask her if she wants to take breather. Click. She says: "Shush!" Click again. On she goes: cough.

Helga's Post-war Year

Gertrud: For the last time sit down.

Helga: I've lost my complete appetite. Luncheon—this basement—

Gertrud: Hush! For the last time, sit down.

Helga: Of all—Gertrud! Gertrud! This pillow!!!

Gertrud: Ha ha ha ha ha. Hadn't you better go and powder your nose?

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Helga: I am nauseous—

Gertrud: Now now now. Pick up your napkin so we can eat.

Helga: Of all—Gertrud! Gertrud! Get it away. Get it away! They petrify me, spiders. I smell smoke. My hair, my hair. It's on fire! Help. Help. Fire. How vividly it comes back to me—the post-war years. I was on my way to see my Dutch-Malay beloved. (Ahem) Hola, the spiders in that slum street in Java—I'd taken the wrong (cough cough) turn—in more ways than one. I was in a blue ante-room, resting on a red bench. I ask the Chinese custodian: in which direction is the Queen Victoria Lounge (cough cough cough) where a Herr H'wan Boog Ryk (ahem) is awaiting me to take me onto his yacht in the harbor, since we are sailing to (cough cough cough cough cough cough cough cough) Hawaii. One block away only. So relieved! Ten minutes to kill! Celebrate, love to. Now we are in his basement living quarters. Fizzy drink. Woozy. I came to in a pagoda (cough cough cough cough cough cough cough) with monkeys everywhere (cough cough cough cough cough cough cough ahem)—one relieves himself—scoops up excrement with spider imbedded in it still wriggling on his finger. He eats it. I throw up. The custodian enters. He's in saffron robes. He orders me to wear a veil. (Cough cough cough cough cough cough cough) I apportion the grain from the donations—so much for each monk, so much for their relations and hangers-on and various and sundry bedmates. Months pass. Hearing those sutras helped me find a stoic inner strength that saw me through the ensuing struggle for freedom (cough cough cough cough cough cough cough cough ahem ahem) which meant sacrificing human relationships for the destruction of enemy machinery, one's single goal in life. In particular,

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the steel-blue claw in the harbor that held us subject. Ah, great sweet interludes between bosomy mothers fanning themselves in the doorways of their hovels and willowy saboteuses united to free the delicate young revolutionaries! My first assignment? The Ryk Dye Works. Gutters all around the plant with loathsome spiders feasting on the vegetable dyes, their progeny crawling about the food stalls... woozy. Disguised as govern—bomb—governess—bomb in pram. A car pulls up. Police! The needles! Striped straws everywhere! Liberation! Sucking up the evil-doers! An explosion. The steel-blue claw was no more. In the hospital (cough cough cough cough cough cough cough cough cough cough AHEM AHEM cough cough cough cough) the first words I said were—

Gertrud: As I've explicated already, we have neither candles nor music for this luncheon repast. I'm plain tired. Let's eat.

Helga: Let's say Grace.

Gertrud: Grace!

Helga: Why must you torture me this way?

Gertrud: Whoop whoop whoop. Oh very well. Oh God (cough cough cough cough cough cough cough cough cough AHEM AHEM cough cough cough) in whom we live and move and are, concede a restoring rain—

Must have been at this point I went into deep personality envelope builder-upper trance. Jungle trip...Diana "Vienna"... in cave...mist comes in... high up... drink snow water... "Let's never go back"... Barry safeguards orchids at base camp...my Helga wounds dry up... breasts skitter off into sky like bats...

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love for Diana "Vienna" wells up...I want to spend my life with her...huddled in each other's arms...begins bending tongue of my belt...probes stomach button hollow, gingerly ...

Revelation

"COUGH COUGH COUGH"

Self-awareness trance disrupted... "as Gertrud says 'restoring rain,' the washing machine goes kerflooey... and the two women dive under the table, huddled in each other's"...dinky thought-cube vision...

Human Touch

for work colleag
nd employees co
for those tangen
affected and fin
ally inexplicably
human touch a r
e-seat open with
oppet in it cudd

"COUGH COUGH COUGH"

All sorts of fold-ins...Blue Silo...FOU... supply...kernels ...one's own life-blood...Figure 8...rubber syphon...slum street...cave...windbreaker...rumble-seat...accident vertigo ..."Helga whispers Grace..."

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COUGH COUGH COUGH
"—O God in whom we—"
COUGH COUGH COUGH

Hooded person unbuttons Barry's fly. Left hand proceeds from one button to the next, deftly, like practiced mechanist. His blue jeans fall. Hooded person's right hand cups dick.

COUGH COUGH COUGH
"—live and move and—"
COUGH COUGH COUGH

for work colleag
nd employees co
for those tangen
affected and fin
ally inexplicably
human touch a r
e-seat open with
oppet in it cudd

COUGH COUGH COUGH
"—are we implore thy—"
COUGH COUGH COUGH

Barry places his hands on hooded figure's shoulders. Hooded figure falls to knees. Change angle of position: Barry faces me. Back of hooded figure's head bobs from side to side. Hein.

COUGH COUGH COUGH
"—clemency so that—"
COUGH COUGH COUGH

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COUGH COUGH COUGH
"—thou having made—"
COUGH COUGH COUGH

Hooded figure's head makes T motion. Right-side up! Left to right, along elastic-band of Barry's jockey shorts, then straight down dick outline (guess-work—head blocks vision)

COUGH COUGH COUGH
"—to cease the flooding—"
COUGH COUGH COUGH

for work colleag
nd employees co
for those tangen
affected and fin
ally inexplicably
human touch a r
e-seat open with
oppet in it cudd

COUGH COUGH COUGH
"—rain shalt show to—"
COUGH COUGH COUGH

straight back up to elastic-band continuing left to right. Then straight across elastic-band to far left. Repeat. Speeds up. Comic metronome effect—with lurch in the middle, a limp!

COUGH COUGH COUGH
"—us through the calm—"
COUGH COUGH COUGH

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COUGH COUGH COUGH
"—sky the hilarity of—"
COUGH COUGH COUGH

Hooded figure pulls down Barry's jockey shorts with both hands. They get stuck at his knees, or else are left there out of carelessness. Hooded figure's head bobs back and forth.

for work colleag
nd employees co
for those tangen
affected and fin
ally inexplicably
human touch a r
e-seat open with
oppet in it cudd

Barry's eyes are closed. Jaws start working: must be grinding his teeth. His tongue shows between his lips: just its tip. "M." "Mm." "Mmm." "Mmmm." "Mmmmm." "Mmmmmm."

COUGH COUGH COUGH
"—thy face. So be it."
COUGH COUGH COUGH

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INFO:

1. Barry lowers hood. Black hair.
2. Ex-hooded person turns sideways—a little. Bobbing continues.
3. Ruddy complexion. Half of face revealed. Realize it's me! Accident vertigo...tendrils...steel-blue claw in distance...barn.
4. Dead ringer person reaches up to hair, yanks at it—left and right. Zipper. Just rubbery stuff with hair attached. Stuffed into pocket. Tumbling down... hair...blonde... starts to turn sideways.
5. Barry Wingate waves at me: conquering hero wave.
6. Bobbing person turns, tenth of face...girl...young girl... fifth of face... fold-ins start really proliferating...shorn ears...grunts of pleasure... "Hein"...tepid bath...water reddens...peeing out...supply of one's own life-blood... City Foam... half of face...autombol...FOU...mobile home...Ch-Wa-Wa midget...it's Diana "Vienna"...bobbing...side to side...Hein.

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HIATUS: ORCHID ODE

magnificent knolls
out of which issued forth singing
mist wisps (love-taps)

no one on this long long porch
laughs when I joke about bushes
the funniness of branches jiggling

outline at dusk of two breasts
immortals with insomnia arise from the earth at will
don't remember anything pre-milk

but that's me agog on the arm akimbo
no more comfortable then than now
feigning sleep on the flexed biceps

breather: a violet sky
no—a violent sky with bruises
no—my first purple cloud orchid

soft Southern singing below in steerage
of white protuberances feeding on mere air
on deck a whiff of wet leaves

zooming along groggily
even signposts seemed languorous later that summer
they all wanted to "bum a ride"

hard to achieve a legitimate idyll
hard too to digest seeds on the wing (though birds do)
recent singing (in heavy traffic) keeps receding

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ACCIDENT VERTIGO

Another continent!

Nothing but solitaries around one. One finishes one's coffee, one's lip is bleeding from a metal sliver imbedded in the sugar cube which refuses to dissolve however hard one hacks it with one's spoon, and the spoon handle bends if much pressure is exerted, until it is curved, like an old-fashioned baby spoon. So what is there to do but proceed to the nearest newsstand. All the newspapers have identical headlines: ACCIDENT VERTIGO. It's the main topic at parties, or in stalled vehicles, or in cabaret shows in the red-light district—("I dunno where to go: Got Big A Vertigo...")—time for a relaxing cigarette. The match tip splits, and part of it arcs into a pile of cheap green magazines, the printing machine of which must be on the blink too, as one can dimly see its feature article entitled—is that an "I"—and another "I" —is that "GO"— how simple: "VERTIGO"—and that smudged part must be—it isn't smudged at all! It's a paper weight that the vendor's just moved, a joke piece of dog excrement disguised as a cucumber, a popular gift item in the area, made of plastic, hein, hein? So plastic it catches fire, WHOOSH! Flames abetted by the bottle of bootleg wheat-mash-and-ether-and-rubbing alcohol the old man is holding out teasingly to the woman selling pencils on the platform with kiddie-car wheels. Where are all the solitaries? Racing down the street, yes, the newsstand's on fire, and the refuse trough next to it—the pencil woman's propelling her platform, the vendor and the bootlegger are struggling to get out of their overcoats—the fur collars are on fire—but their speed only fans the flames—a tractor's gone berserk—it's hit them—one flattens oneself against a government building—the wall buckles, a family leap in front of one (how lucky they were watching the passing scene from the ornate iron balcony that narrowly misses one as it crashes to the sidewalk) and run off into the night, hobbling, quickly inventing a rabbity way of avoiding the tractor—more coffee? The loudspeakers of the avenue have interrupted a medley of riverboat hosanna songs

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(needless to say at the wrong tempo, due to a mechanical failure, so they sound like dirges) and are promising free coffee to anyone in the vicinity whose first name contains the syllable "vert." Most likely, this is part of a campaign to change people's responses to such words as "vertigo" and "accident." A blind woman throws her white cane in the air: Vera, my name is Vera, goodness how lucky. She steps into the street—and vanishes! A manhole: the lids split in two if stepped on if one weighs more than eighty pounds—the sign says so, stenciled on the gutter. Ah, she's clambering out now, cursing everyone and his Dutch uncle.

Another continent!

Solitaries fretting interminably about damaged candy bars with dead leaves and wasps in them—the manufacturer insists these are one-in-a-million lucky prizes, if one plants the leaves, mulching them with ten more crumbled candy bars, and then injects the wasps with a side-product (hypodermic already filled) called "Vertigo"—

Another continent!

Rife with rumors, rumors of new regulations! Is this Harappa? Yuss, it is Harappa as your teecket steepulates. But this is Mohenjo-daro, with its famed red domes, not to mention the Mohenjo-daro-esque sutras being angrily shouted by the crowd outside this rickshaw! Yes, it is that too: Harrappa, Mohenjo-daro, Mohenjo-daro-Harrapa. It is a peeriod of transeetion. Yuss?

Nothing to do but sell one's belongings and move to a new commune in the ice-lands. The solitaries whom one joins, who have the same idea, are already laughing at their having fretted about their candy bars named ACCIDENT (printed in yellow streak-of-lightning lettering), piled high in their closets, half-gnawed, with tooth-marks that will actually be a useful record in case they need dental care (icy winds are bad for porous enamel) which is a *fait accompli* (free) according to the new regulations, along with hoes, rakes, shovels, palmetto slats, and valuable vari-colored corn seeds from the vaults of the Memories, which the commune has been promised access to seven days a week (free), not directly, but via a feeder

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station that is being hurried to completion, barring certain technical difficulties that have arisen, namely—gourd notions. Gourd notions? Who knows what that was, before it got garbled by a series of transmission experts—god notions? Hoarded rations? Border of oceans? Yuss, border condeetions. The excited voices of the solitaries, burbling around one! Soon these tubular environments (*M* they're called, just *M*)—("Twelve new *M* this week, Hashville, Roston, Yrie, Vontpelier, Mt. Paul")—("Why hasn't the west more *M*?")—("Wait for next week, bub!")—one watches the cube sliver in one's coffee suspiciously—from the lip pomade that was to have healed the cut, one has caught a skin fungus condition (brown specks that produce "spores" each summer, giving one's skin a rough, sandpaper texture)—ah, safe! no sliver, one swallows the last of the tepid cube with oily Paisley patterns on its surface (good! detergent residue most likely)—

"My throat's on fire, my throat's on fire!"—the waitress and counterman dive for the floor, lay there, face down as the coffee machine explodes, jetting steam—the specialist says the lip "spores" are not at fault here, the throat was aggravated by "spores" from the improperly washed cup, as certain ingredients of the detergent combined with certain ingredients in the cube (ought not to have been in it)—the sugar manufacturer obligingly traces them to "unclean" trucks: particles of dust adhered to shipments of alfalfa —it's all immaterial! Time for—another continent! Time for the commune with its guaranteed implements, its solitaries, and access to The Memories. Yes, soon those tubular environments will dot the land. Tpringfield! Zampa! Gew Orleans! Itlanta! Theyenne! *Mms* they're now called, jocularly, *Mms*—by the other solitaries. New regulations! *Mmms* they're now called, *Mmms*. Not in personal conversation anymore—speeches mainly. And that's not the only change. New regulations! No implements. No access to the feeder station except for ten minutes every Sunday AM at 11—which is just when the inhabitants of the island the feeder station is located on prohibit all communiqués to or from the outside world. From 11 AM to 12 noon, they sit on the rocks, facing the very continent we are

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on, and repeat the Stone Mantras silently to themselves.

Stone, oh stone of stone, stone of stone stone,
Stone, oh stone of stone, stone of stone stone stone,
Stone, oh stone of stone, stone oh stone stone stone of stone

All, all immaterial. The regulations have changed again—the commune's area has been assigned to a financieress (the solitaries hiss "financieress, financieress" so it sounds like "things are getting serious") who has been given the commune's harvests going back seven years. Harvests! *What* harvests! Now those tubular environments are muttered about reverently—*Mmmms*. Generally in spring, one hears it murmured, someone on the other side of the glacier, one of the original solitaries, getting some sun, resting up for summer: Santa Claus and sleighs and bobbing for pale-green health lozenges jocularly referred to as "Accidents". The commune is referred to as "Vertigo." Perhaps some deep-seated need on the part of the solitaries to mention the inevitable, and therefore possibly prevent it from ever happening. Debts! Piled on debts! Debts! They're as bad as the blizzards that add new and higher levels of snow each year, so that one must continually build additions on top of old roofs to provide sub-standard living quarters, cubbyholes whole units of solitaries are forced to share in shifts, one cuts a door through to the surface—by the time it's finished, it's impossible to open it—the drifts outside press against it. The widow's walk (first year) that came to be regarded as such an oddity (wasted labor), is now a sub-sub-sub basement, with clumsy drawings pasted on the inside of the windows, scenes of green plateaus, with elks grazing, and throngs gathering for a picnic, with athletic competitions and contests of all sorts—a fine den to relax in under the gales. The expenses though! The outlay! The financieress proves to be understanding—she knows reinforcements and buttresses come dear these days. Wouldn't it be simpler to start afresh? She cancels the debts. On the spot, she is dubbed *Mmmmmm*. MMMMMM. That's the design decided on for New Vertigo: units of six row houses of double arches, with a snow trough between the arches, snow which will be instantly melted by gas burners at intervals in

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the trough. New seed arrives—butterbeans, from the vaults of The Memories (no one mentions *them* anymore) to which she has constant access by means of a private system of relayed impulses, the nature of which she is not at liberty to divulge. At last, another continent. New lodgements, new eatments, vistas, and a future of green fields that will chomp up the glaciers, tendrils that will "ossify the snow particles".

All, all immaterial. The regulations have changed again. She is not the financieress! She is a political-socio-economic opportunist of the rankest order! The genuine financieress arrives, after a saga of mishaps (waylaid, a period in an asylum in a forest, cafeteria work, saves enough to approach a first-rate legal adviser, fights her way through the courts, success!) —and is not pleased by the lay-out, not pleased at all. New debts! Back to the old, buried dwellings that now need new extensions upward with egresses to the surface. Trap-door egresses at the end of a series of ladders, one on top of the other. Egresses that are never used, for the financieress refuses to underwrite the expense of top-grade preservatives for the butterbeans. And how else can they reach the cities to the north? From her lean-to, she smells the rancid night air, and announces to us solitaries:

"White fungi are spreading along the new gullies.
Nothing wriggles in the labs with ticketed jellies.
Trinkets—human hair plaited into flower offerings—
thank you for them. I have been in touch with the Mings,

and they will set up here a vast pleasure park,
of rocks and snow and silence and winds and the dark,
one solitary will be chosen per year—by lot.
Good-bye. Amnesty! No one will be shot."

It is well to be in the flatlands of Texas, my hands resting spread out on my thighs as I sit, trap-door overhead, immobile as a quiet and composed Egyptian posing for a bas-relief of his ruler, phone propped on my upraised shoulder, head bent down, eyes following the bobbing.

Another continent.

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Single Skies

Sarah Plimpton

Clouds taken through the window rising from the rain lit on the edge curved out
The field in the sun shining in the face
Planing clouds across an eye
A larger sun on each day growing through that other sky
Taking out the air
Where the bones were made to hold the light
Pushing your face from the skull
Burning through the solid head blackened in the center of your eye
Asking to see your face
When it turned around
On opened eyes
Unmade
The sun through your head rising in the empty sky.

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The sky of a single day drawn out from the bone
Your eye pressed to the window cold lost hold
Roughed on the wall painted on
Broken open to the sky taking your sun and burnt the sky redder in the evening
Cold for the winter skies bending in
Spread on blacker clouds grown in the storm
Come open in the freezing rain
Walking in those rooms already closer to the door
Darker suns further on down the road
I'd given you steel flowers cracked with a shovel cold through the ice
The wind blown so far taking up the roots
Stripped the leaves from the sky on the ground
No longer faced
A single sky

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I watched their faces up against the sky given up so close to my own and turning away. Marked overnight and seldom seen. That time of day. Walking back I hadn't remembered that they were there.

You were trying each step on the other side of the wall.

From on the stairs.

Each cloud came off the trees.

Not telling where I had been walking on the fields. The sky over the forest drawing in the clouds until the sun disappeared turning the trees to a blacker green.

Pulling those faces out through the eyes and putting them on. Each face until the eyes turned cold using them too long to see where you were.

I'd moved away on another road running on the grass.

Through another sky that wasn't mine. Held through the trees with the blue that filled the room.

The sky turning your head in the wind not so close to the clouds the eye facing the back. Growing through the bone to the side of the door.

Inside mine I looked at the trees the branches broken on the leaves the light on your arms folded yellow.

The clouds in pieces near the ground. The grass in the middle of the dirt road pulled through towards the back when you turned your head.

With the wind off the fields. They had already hayed when I turned the sky around and walked through the back. Leaving off the wind gathered up and climbing through. Green on the clouds blue underneath where I hadn't looked.

Watching your feet on the road.

Spent days and hot. The redness of the sun dried on the grass harder at the tips.

Turning your face over to look at the back. Where the sky came in with the wind a blue sky cut through the trees and made into fields. The sun pulled into the bone the traces of road left behind.

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Bill Bissett

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Prose 22

Plan of the city of O. The great square
curves down toward the Cathedral. The
water runs out into night where the patron
saint still maintains his loft. He enters
from the lower level and pulls up the ladder
after him. The women and children and
most of the old men spend their time painting
pictures of the ladder. The rest lay the
three kinds of stone or type the performance
for the eastern quarter. There the first
colony left its box-shaped mark. But
the sun always goes down in several places,
so the clocks serve as maps. And at the
end of the nearest mountain stands the
larger and less perfect box.

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David Antin

West

The soldiers were in the habit of saying that a dying soldier was "going west." Are you going west on your vacation? We turned west at Allentown and drove westward for several hours. Their motto was "Westward Ho!" The suffering in the Near East was desperate.

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Jim Brodey

Sky à la Mode

Lie facedown in the pulsating mantra:
dried flowers bathed in sunshine
Of slowly submerging monograms
of hair flowing down through miniature elephant
herds
The vision is scared
and should not be allowed to blur
except during brainstorm
When the light is propelled by sleeping
and the evil that men do live after them
Stretch all your muscles until you maintain breath redemption
from songs
which
Like thoughts or strokes of immense perception lay awaiting
that cleansing flame driven through black curls
coarse
Threads of rhythm
inclining to soak energy with an inhuman accuracy
to
cross the intervening space where water
was first discovered
fucking in the air

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Clark Coolidge

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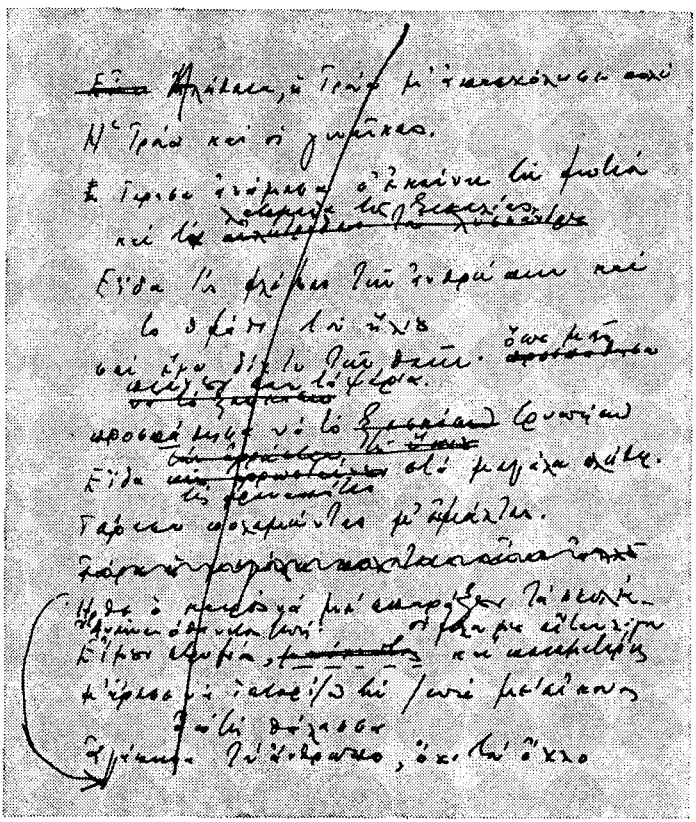

Manuscript page of "Euripides the Athenian"

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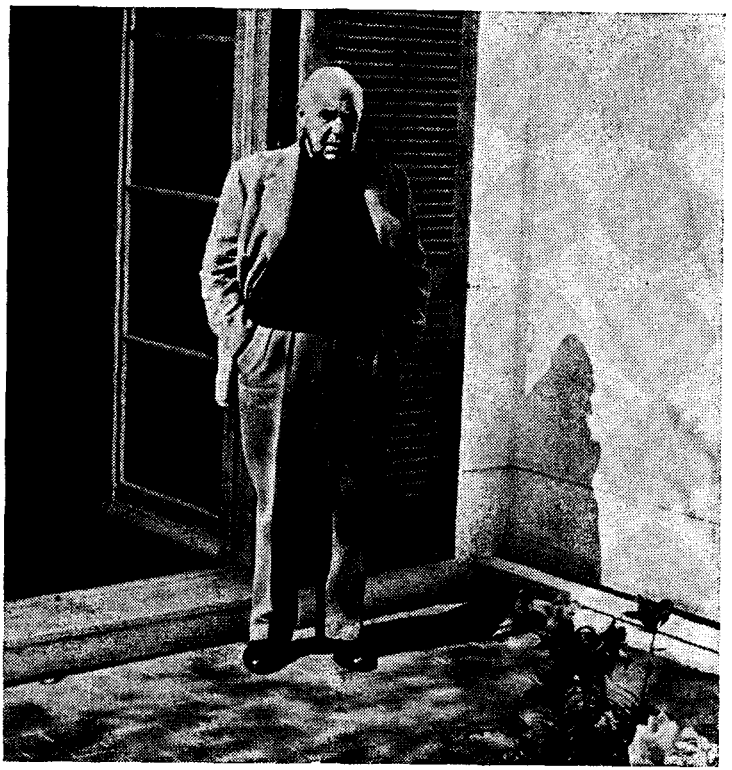
The Art of Poetry XIII

George Seferis



Seferis was nearing the end of his longest visit to the United States at the time of this interview, which took place in late December of 1968. He had just completed a three-month term as fellow of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and he was in particularly good spirits because he felt that his visit had served for a kind of rejuvenation: an interlude free from the political tensions that had been building up for some months in Athens and the

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occasion for both reflection and performance. The latter included a series of readings—at Harvard, Princeton, Rutgers, Pittsburgh, Washington, D.C., and the YMHA Poetry Center in New York—Seferis reading in Greek and the interviewer in English, each appearance with its distinct qualities of excitement and response. In Pittsburgh, for example, the audience (composed mostly of local Greek-Americans) seemed bewildered by the poetry during the reading but responded to the poet during the reception afterwards as they might to Greece's exiled king. The New York reading began with an introduction by Senator Eugene McCarthy. During the discussion period several questions from the audience had to do specifically with the political situation in Greece. Seferis refused to answer them. He was thought to be evasive by some in the audience, but he held his ground, and during the dinner following the reading he gave his reasons in private: he didn't consider it proper to criticize his government while a guest on foreign soil, safely outside the boundaries of the government's displeasure. He saved his answers for his return to Greece: an uncompromising statement against the dictatorship presented to local and foreign correspondents in defiance of martial law and at obvious personal risk (N. Y. Times, *March 29, 1969*).

The combination of diplomatic tact and high conscience that defines the political character of Seferis also colors his presence and personal style. He is a heavy man, his voice gentle when disengaged, his movements slow, almost lethargic at times; yet he has a habit of gripping your arm as he moves, and the grip, though amiable in the old-fashioned European manner, remains young and firm enough to give you word of the strength still in him. And the voice has a second edge that cuts sharply when he senses something dubious or facile challenging it. Then, on the diplomatic side again, comes a sense of humor: a love of nonsense, of the risqué joke, of kidding himself and others with a wry little moon of a smile that appears unexpectedly in his oval face—especially after he's trapped his listener with the question: "Why are you laughing?" An American poet once referred to him as a "Middle-Eastern troglodyte" in a poem about his first reading in New York some years ago. When the interviewer finally got up the courage to show him the poem, Seferis fixed him with a sharp, uncompromising look. "Middle-

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Eastern troglodyte. Ridiculous and inaccurate. I once called myself a Cappadocian troglodyte and that is what I plan to remain. Why are you laughing?" Then the smile.

The interview took place in the Seferis temporary home at the Institute for Advanced Study, an unpretentious second-floor apartment with three rooms, with a large window overlooking the grounds, the bookcase almost empty, none of the modern Greek paintings and classical treasures that set the style of the Seferis home in Athens. Yet the poet was delighted with the place because it gave him access to a number of exotic things: changing trees, and squirrels, and children crossing the lawn from school. His wife Maro—hair still gold and braided like a girl's—was present throughout the interview, sometimes listening with apparent amusement, sometimes preparing food or drinks in the background. There were three recording sessions. Seferis would take a while to warm up with the microphone watching him from the coffee table, but whenever he began to reminisce about friends from the war years and before—Henry Miller, Durrell, Katsimbalis—or the years of his childhood, he would relax into his natural style and talk easily until the tape died out on him.

INTERVIEWER

Let me start by asking you about the Institute for Advanced Study and how you feel, only recently retired from the diplomatic service, about beginning a new career as a student.

SEFERIS

My dear, the problem which puzzles me is: what is advanced study? Should one try to forget, or to learn more, when one is at my stage of advanced study? Now I must say, on a more prosaic level, that I enjoy very much the whole situation here because there are very nice people, very good friends and I enjoy—how shall I put it?—their horizons. There are many horizons around me: science, history, archaeology, theology, philosophy...

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INTERVIEWER

But don't you feel out of place among so many scientists? So many historians?

SEFERIS

No, because I am attracted by people whose interests are not in my own area.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think there's an advantage—as I think Cavafy would probably have thought—to being in dialogue with historians? In other words, do you feel that history has something particular to say to the poet?

SEFERIS

If you remember, Cavafy was *proud* of having a sense of history. He used to say: "I am a man of history"—something like that, I don't remember the exact quotation. I am not that way; but still, I feel the pressure of history. In another way perhaps: more mythological, more abstract or more concrete... I don't know.

INTERVIEWER

How about the relation of the Greek poet to his particular historical tradition? You once said that there is no ancient Greece in Greece. What did you mean by that exactly?

SEFERIS

I meant Greece is a continuous process. In English the expression "ancient Greece" includes the meaning of "finished," whereas for us Greece goes on living, for better or for worse; it is *in* life, has not expired yet. That is a fact. One can make the same argument when one discusses the pronunciation of ancient Greek. Your scholars in America or in England or in France may be quite right in adopting the Erasmic pronunciation: for them Greek is a dead language; but for us it is another story. The fact is, you consider that ancient Greek has terminated its function at a certain point and this enables

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you to pronounce it—with my regrets—in an arbitrary way.

INTERVIEWER

Then you obviously see the Greek tradition in language, as well as in other things, as a continuous process. That is not the belief of some classical and Byzantine scholars in this country—and, I suppose, elsewhere.

SEFERIS

You know why that happens? Because the subject, the history, of Greece is so large that each scholar limits himself to a certain period or branch and nothing exists outside of it. For example, Gibbon considered that a thousand years of life were a decline. How can a people be in decline for a thousand years? After all, between the Homeric poems and the birth of Christ eight hundred years elapsed—or something like that—and then presumably there were a thousand years of decline.

INTERVIEWER

On the question of the Greek poet's relation to his tradition, it has always seemed to me that the Greek poet has an advantage over his Anglo-Saxon counterpart who makes use of Greek mythology, and sometimes even of Greek landscape. I remember years ago when I was writing a thesis on what I thought were English influences in the poetry of Cavafy and Seferis, I asked you about certain images that crop up in your landscape, for example the symbolic meaning of the statues that appear in your work. You turned to me and said: "But those are real statues. They existed in a landscape I had seen." What I think you were saying is that you always start with the fact of a living, actual setting and move from there to any universal meaning that might be contained in it.

SEFERIS

An illustration of that from someone who is a specialist in classical statues came the other day from an English scholar, who was lecturing about the statuary of the Parthenon. I went up to congratulate him after his lecture and he said to

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me, as I remember: "But you have a line which expresses something of what I meant when you say 'the statues are not the ruins—*we* are the ruins.' " I mean I was astonished that a scholar of his caliber was using a line from me to illustrate a point.

INTERVIEWER

The imagery that a poet gets from his childhood is something we've discussed before. You once distinguished yourself from the average Englishman by suggesting that donkeys probably did for you what footballs and cars might do for them. I remember you also talked about the sea and the sailors of your native village near Smyrna.

SEFERIS

You know, the strange thing about imagery is that a great deal of it is subconscious and sometimes it appears in a poem and nobody knows wherefrom this emerged. But it is rooted, I am certain, in the poet's subconscious life, often of his childhood, and that's why I think it is decisive for a poet: the childhood that he has lived.

I think there are two different things functioning: conscious and subconscious memory. I think the way of poetry is to draw from the subconscious. It is not the way you write your memoirs, let's say, or the way you try to remember your past, your early life. I remember many things from my childhood which *did* impress me. For instance, when I was a child I discovered somewhere in a corner of a sort of bungalow we had in my grandmother's garden—at the place where we used to spend our summers—I discovered a compass from a ship which, as I learned afterwards, belonged to my grandfather. And that strange instrument—I think I destroyed it in the end by examining and reexamining it, taking it apart and putting it back together and then taking it apart again—became something mythical for me. Or again, when autumn approached, when there would be a rather strong wind and the fishing barges would have to sail through rough weather, we would always be glad when they were at last anchored, and my

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mother would say to someone among the fishermen who'd gone out: "Ah, bravo, you've come through rough weather"; and he would answer: "Madam, you know, we always sail with Charon at our side." That's moving to me. Perhaps when I wrote about Ulysses in that early poem you've commented on ["Upon a Foreign Verse"]—perhaps I had in mind somebody like that fisherman. Those "certain old sailors from my childhood" who would recite the *Erotocritos*. In any case, I think it is always a bit dangerous to make unconscious images conscious, to bring them out into the light, because, you know, they dry out immediately.

INTERVIEWER

Have you felt any burden from having spent so many years writing for a tiny audience—an audience so small in the early years of your career that you had to publish your work at your own expense and issued something under three hundred copies of each volume. That is a situation quite unfamiliar to an established American poet.

SEFERIS

I'll give you an example. When I published my first volume, *Strophe* [*Turning Point*], I issued 150 copies. That was in 1931. And I remember that in 1939 there were still copies available at the bookseller—copies that I withdrew from circulation so that I could bring out a new edition of the volume in 1940. But I must say that soon after that things began to change a bit. When I left for Egypt after the collapse of Greece in the war against Germany, I left behind me three editions of my work—*Logbook I*, *Mythistorima*, and *Book of Exercises*, besides the earlier volumes *Cistern* and *Strophe*—left them there all brand new, without having sold a single copy before I sailed for Crete and Cairo with the Greek government in exile, as you know. During my absence everything was sold out. When I came back no copies remained. The foreign occupation—enemy occupation—had given the Greek public the opportunity of concentration and reading. And I reckoned that when I returned at the end of the occupation I was much better known in Greece than before.

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INTERVIEWER

It's a very strange phenomenon, the revival of interest in poetry during the period of the occupation in Greece. I've heard about this from other poets: Gatsos and Elytis, for example. Poetry became an activity that brought together the Athenian intellectuals for readings and discussion, so that in a way it became the richest period for poetry in this century after the period of the Thirties.

SEFERIS

Elytis published his book during the occupation, and Gatsos his: I mean the famous *Amorgos* came out during the occupation!

INTERVIEWER

What happened after the occupation? Why was there silence for so long among the leading poets?

SEFERIS

It wasn't silence. Times had changed, and horizons had widened, and everybody tried to see more of life outside the country; they were trying to find new modes of expression.

INTERVIEWER

I wonder if you have felt anything new and interesting through reading to large public audiences in this country. The evidence of friends of mine who have no knowledge at all of Greek is that they have captured, from your reading in Greek, a different sense of the poetry's rhythm from what they get out of my reading in English.

SEFERIS

That is very important. But I can say something more about this experience of reading in America. The other day another poet reacted by sending me a poem about my reading. That is a new kind of response. But still, the important thing is to see reactions, not to be applauded or not applauded.

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INTERVIEWER

After your reading at Rutgers this fall, someone in the audience asked you what you thought of the English translations of your poetry, and you went on to make generous gestures towards your English translators, but then you added: "Of course the best translation of my poetry is in Chinese, a language which I don't understand at all."

SEFERIS

It isn't difficult to elaborate on that, because you know, I feel in languages that I know, perhaps because I know them too well (not English, but in French, for example, which I know really well) that there are other possibilities in the translation. For Chinese there are no other possibilities. But translating—I'm changing the question a little bit—is interesting always because it is a means of controlling your own language. Now of course the English language is a more stable language than ours; we have to create ours, so to speak, all the time we are writing.

INTERVIEWER

Pound said that translation is a means for a writer to sharpen continually his awareness of his own language, and he advised young poets to translate whenever they could.

SEFERIS

Provided you don't overdo it, I think it is always useful.

INTERVIEWER

You are a poet who writes in a language which few people know outside Greece. I wonder if you feel any resentment of the fact that you are known in the world of poetry outside your own country largely through translation.

SEFERIS

There are compensations. For example, about a year ago, I received a letter from an American saying to me: "Well, I have learned modern Greek in order to read Seferis." That's a great compliment, I think. It is much more personal than

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the case of a man who learns a foreign language at school, isn't it? I've heard other people say: "Well, you know, we learned our Greek from your poems." A great reward. And then I should add, perhaps, this situation of not having a very large audience has something good in it too. I mean that it educates you in a certain way: not to consider that great audiences are the most important reward on this earth. I consider that even if I have three people who read me, I mean really read me, it is enough. That reminds me of a conversation I had once upon a time during the only glimpse I ever had of Henri Michaux. It was when he had a stop-over in Athens, coming from Egypt, I think. He came ashore while his ship was in Piraeus just in order to have a look at the Acropolis. And he told me on that occasion: "You know, my dear, a man who has only one reader is not a writer. A man who has two readers is not a writer either. But a man who has *three* readers (and he pronounced "three readers" as though they were three million), that man is *really* a writer."

INTERVIEWER

You said earlier there is a problem in Greek of establishing a language.That's something which most American readers naturally don't understand. We have a language. Our problem is always to stretch the language which we have so that it somehow shows a new vitality. When you talk about establishing or creating a language you mean something quite different.

SEFERIS

We've had the calamity of academic intervention. Mark you, I mean from both the Left and the Right. In the beginning we had the intervention of professors who wanted to transform our living language into something abstract in order to reach some sort of "idea" of a pure language. On the other side, we had the fight for *demotiki*, as we call the popular spoken language. But this tradition—the professorial tradition—was so strong that there was a sort of academic mind which fought actively for both the puristic and the vernacular lan-

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guage. The best way to progress is by forgetting all that academic intervention. For example, I admire very much the Cretan Renaissance. In that period you find a whole poem—10,000 lines, an enormous poem—where there is no strain at all, no effort at all; the language functions quite naturally, without any flagrant tendency to be learned.

INTERVIEWER

It's interesting that you take an effortless poem for a model, because I remember that, in another context, you described style as the difficulty one encounters in expressing himself.

SEFERIS

I said that in lecturing about Makriyannis, who, as you know, never learned how to write or read until the age of thirty-five. When you see his manuscript, it is like a wall—a wall built up out of stones, one placed on top of the other. It is very strange. For example, he never uses punctuation at all. No paragraphs. Nothing. It goes on like that. And you see that each word is added to another word like a stone on top of another stone. I mean, in any case, that when you really feel something, you face the difficulty of expressing it. And that, after all, forms your style.

INTERVIEWER

What are the difficulties you've encountered in establishing your own style?

SEFERIS

That's another story. In my youth I worked very much over the Greek language. Glossaries, old texts, medieval texts, and things of that kind. But the difficulty wasn't only in studying them; the difficulty was how to forget them and be natural. I had the blessing, perhaps, of being natural, I don't know. That's for others to say...

INTERVIEWER

I know you always considered it the first order of business

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for a poet to try for economy in style. This seems to be in contrast to the dominant mode of your predecessors—at least the mode of Palamas and Sikelianos.

SEFERIS

That's perhaps a local characteristic. I felt at the time of my early efforts that in Greece they were too rhetorical, and I reacted against it. That was my feeling. And I reacted against it in many ways. For example, in the use of words, of adjectives—especially compound adjectives, which I avoided. To avoid certain things is deliberate with me, you know. My interest in expression was not so much in the color of the language, which Greek has plenty of, but in precision above all; and in order to be precise, you have to be spare in the use of your material. You remember that Valery said lyricism is, after all, the development of an exclamation, of an "Ah." For me "Ah" is quite enough. I never try to elaborate on the exclamation.

INTERVIEWER

Let me pursue the matter of style as process of using language sparingly. Do you agree that in your own work there is a development, a further economy of means, between *Strophe* and everything that followed it?

SEFERIS

Of course. It is not so much a stylistic development as a sort of evolution. Everything evolves. I mean one *has* to evolve—one *has* to see new things. One has to see other aspects and express these other aspects. Certainly there is an evolution, but I don't see it as a "development" in inverted commas. If I had years more in front of me, I would perhaps write in another way, even in another style. I might again use the strict line or rhymed verse, perhaps. In poetry you change the base of things from time to time in order to have a fresh expression. The main thing you are looking for in poetry is to avoid worn-out expressions. That's the great problem.

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INTERVIEWER

Now what about the problem of developing a prose style. You are one of the very few poets in Greece who has had almost as strong an impact on the language of prose criticism as you've had on the language of poetry. Developing a live yet careful prose style must have been part of your struggle from the beginning.

SEFERIS

Yes, but, you know, my struggle was always for precision. That is at the base of it. And of course in prose it appears more obvious—I mean the matter of economy.

INTERVIEWER

This tape machine seems to have stopped recording. Say something and let's see if it's still working properly.

SEFERIS

Wallace Stevens was in an insurance company.

INTERVIEWER

Let's hope it will go on with us for awhile. One of your remarks which has interested me is about the question of the relation between poetry and public service; I think you said that the important thing was for the poet not to have a job which was directly connected with that of being a poet.

SEFERIS

I didn't say the "important" thing. I don't know, really, because I can't speak for other people; but for me at least, I suppose that it is a help not to be in a job where I have to write as I write in my notebooks or poetry books. For example, I am not a professor or a teacher or even a newspaperman. I prefer to have another occupation.

INTERVIEWER

Was there anything in your professional career—that is, the experience you had as a diplomat—which may have in-

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fluenced in some way the imagery of your poetry or affected the particular themes you chose to express?

SEFERIS

I don't believe that any themes or any imagery were created by my job, though I might mention—how did you translate it?—the lines from "Last Stop": "souls shriveled by public sins, each holding office like a bird in its cage." I mean that is one of the few images I have drawn directly from my public service. But I could have felt that even if I had not been in the diplomatic service. But it was important for me that I had a job which was not related to my creative work. And the other thing is that I was not—how shall I put it?—not obliged to deal with models which belonged to literature. Of course, there are troubles in that career. The main thing I suffered from was not having enough time. Although others might tell you that it is better not to have time because it is the subconscious which is doing the poetical work. That's the point of view of Tom Eliot. I remember once, when I was transferred from London to Beirut (this was after just one and a half years of service in London), I told him: "My dear Mr. Eliot, I think I am fed up with my career and I shall give up all this." I remember his saying: "Be careful, be careful if you do that," and then he mentioned the subconscious—the subconscious working for poetry. And I told him: "Yes, but if I have a job, an official job which is interfering with my subconscious, then I prefer not to have a job. I mean I would prefer to be a carpenter and to be where my subconscious is quite free to do whatever it likes, dance or not dance." And I added: "You know, I can tell you when my public life began to interfere with my subconscious. It was on the eve of the war with the Italians—in September '40—when I started having political dreams. Then I knew quite well that my subconscious was suffering the onslaught of my official job. 'In dreams responsibilities begin.' "

INTERVIEWER

You once made a comment about the connection between poetry and politics...

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SEFERIS

You mean what I've said about propaganda writing, or "engaged" writing, or whatever you call that kind of writing in our times. I believe that something real, as far as feeling is concerned, should be elaborated as feeling. I don't consider that Aeschylus was making a propaganda play by putting the suffering Persians on stage, or desperate Xerxes, or the ghost of Darius, and so forth. On the contrary, there was human compassion in it. For his enemies. Not that he's not of course glad that the Greeks won the battle of Salamis. But even then he showed that Xerxes' defeat was a sort of divine retribution: a punishment for the hubris that Xerxes committed in flagellating the sea. Since his hubris was to flagellate the sea, he was punished exactly *by* the sea in the battle of Salamis.

INTERVIEWER

Is it possible to compare poetry across national lines? Or do we always have to make qualitative comparisons strictly within a single traditon?

SEFERIS

I feel a sort of reluctance about comparing poets. It is very difficult—even within the same tradition. Try to compare Dante and Alfred, Lord Tennyson, for example: what that would lead to, I don't know. Or, in the French tradition, how can you compare Racine and Victor Hugo? You have to go very deep, to the bottom of the tradition, in order to find some sort of common ground where the comparison can fairly take place. On the other hand, for example, I myself used Yeats in my Stockholm acceptance speech because I had been reading, just a few months before my trip to Stockholm, "The Bounty of Sweden," where he recounts the whole affair of his election to the Nobel Prize: his trip to Stockholm, the ceremony, and everything. And there I felt a sort of relation with him as a human being—not as a poet, but as a human being; because Yeats belonged to a small country with a great folklore tradition, a country which, after all, had political turmoil. By the way, there's another example of a public poet

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who doesn't write propaganda. He writes, for example, a poem about an Irish airman which isn't at all propaganda. "Those I fight I do not hate—" etc. Or he writes "The Second Coming." That too is not propaganda: "The center cannot hold," etc., which after all starts somewhere in Irish political life; but it goes deeper, and that's the whole point, I think.

INTERVIEWER

You've mentioned at your readings, in talking about "The King of Asine," the fact that it had taken you two years to find a way of writing about that particular experience, and then, at some point, after having given your notes for that poem to a friend, you completed the final draft in one long evening. Eliot has implied that you finished the poem (between ten p.m. and three in the morning) exactly because you didn't have your notes before you.

SEFERIS

I had no notes. And he may have been right. I don't know. In my home in Athens, I have all my papers and my books. And I wonder if that's a helpful thing or not, if it's not better to have just a blank writing desk without any papers or any books at all, where you can sit at regular hours every day.

INTERVIEWER

Do you normally make notes on the experience of a poem before you write it?

SEFERIS

Oh, there are many ways. Sometimes I do. Sometimes I do not. There are things which you have to remember, and I have to record these somewhere, so of course I make notes. For example, there is a poem where I have used the chronographer Makhairas, where it was impossible to avoid referring to that story about the demon of fornication.

INTERVIEWER

I didn't mean notes once the poem has been composed in

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your mind, but notes on the experience which, in effect, becomes the poem.

SEFERIS

No, I don't do that. When I say notes, I mean there are those on the material, notes which are needed because they are descriptive. And there are notes that are ideas, poetical ideas. For example, poetical expressions, poetical utterances, that is the kind of notes I mean. If I were to write a poem about you—I might make a note that "Mike has ceased to smoke for many years." I mean if the things sound well in Greek to my ear, I could write it. That's all—things which are indifferent to other people. These I call poetical notes. Sometimes I disregard them altogether, and sometimes I go back to them. Sometimes, when they are quite forgotten, by having a glimpse at them I say: "Oh, that poem was rather interesting," although they don't say anything at all to the ordinary person. Still, they take me back to a certain atmosphere which, in the meantime, has been working, elaborating, a form in my mind.

INTERVIEWER

Do you keep these notes or do you destroy them?

SEFERIS

Oh, I destroy a lot. Some months ago in Athens—there was somebody, a sort of Hellenist, who was interested in photographing notes. And I had the impression that I had kept my notes on *The Cistern*. I looked for them in all my files, and it appeared to me then that I had destroyed them. The only thing that I found was the "Notes for a 'Week'" which have been published quite recently—that is, the two missing poems from that group.

INTERVIEWER

I'm sorry about that, in a way, because I think *The Cistern* is a poem that all of us have found obscure in places, and the notes might have helped—might have helped *me*, anyway.

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SEFERIS

Don't complain about it. They might have made the poem much more obscure, you know. For example, the general idea about my evolution in poetry is: "Ah, you see, Seferis started with regular lines, rhymes, strict versification, and then he moved to free verse." When I see my notes, I see that the main poem of *Strophe*, the "Erotikos Logos," appears to be in very strict versification; but my notes show me that this poem was also written in free verse. I have found some of the first drafts.

INTERVIEWER

Would you ever consider publishing them?

SEFERIS

By God, no.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think that's the reason Eliot was so careful about not rediscovering the lost parts of *The Waste Land* which have now been rediscovered?

SEFERIS

When he told me the story about the writing of *The Waste Land*, he seemed quite desperate about the manuscripts being lost. On the other hand, he also told me how useful—he stressed that point—how *useful* the intervention of Pound had really been.

INTERVIEWER

Do you approve of publishing discarded things?

SEFERIS

I don't know, it depends. It needs a great deal of tact. Not by the poet himself, but by his editors. If they publish them they tend to stress that they are all-important discoveries, and I think this is bad. Overplaying it. The editors and the philologists are always overdoing things, I think.

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INTERVIEWER

I know from a section of your diary which my wife and I translated that your relationship with Eliot was an important one in your life in various ways. I wonder if any other literary figures who are known in the West have also been important to you. I'm thinking particularly of Henry Miller and Lawrence Durell and maybe others I don't know about. I'm thinking also of your own compatriots: Theotokas and Katsimbalis, for example.

SEFERIS

Durrell was much younger than me, you know. He was a very interesting young man when I met him. He was in his mid-twenties. I met him with Henry Miller. They came to Athens to see the Colossus of Maroussi, Katsimbalis. It was on the day—if my memory is correct—of the declaration of war.

INTERVIEWER

But of course Katsimbalis wasn't the Colossus at that point.

SEFERIS

No, but Miller was threatening to make him something very colossal.

INTERVIEWER

Well, he did.

SEFERIS

It was nice to meet them; they were, let's say the first—or if not exactly the first, then the second or third—readers with an understanding of what I was doing. For example, one of them, Miller or Larry, told me after reading my poems: "You know what I like about you is that you turn things inside out. And I mean that in the *good* sense." That was a very nice compliment for me at that time.

INTERVIEWER

How did they come to know your poetry?

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SEFERIS

How. Hm. There were then in English only the translations of Katsimbalis. Manuscript translations, I mean.

INTERVIEWER

When they came to Athens, why did they go directly to Katsimbalis? Why was he the man whom they approached? Was he well-known as a literary figure outside Greece?

SEFERIS

I don't know. It was a matter of common friends, perhaps. He became a bigger literary figure after *The Colossus of Maroussi*. At that time he was more in contact than I was with the English and American literary circles. There was a sort of international bohemia, I might say, by then in Athens. I mean on the eve of the war. I must add that Katsimbalis has that wonderful quality of being without evil intention in his heart. He might criticize somebody, but in a good-hearted way. And he believed that our country, our little country, was able to do something. He had that sort of belief.

INTERVIEWER

What about Henry Miller? How did you respond to him?

SEFERIS

I like Miller because he is a very good-hearted man, and I think—excuse me for saying so, but this is not a criticism: it is great praise to say about a writer that he is a good man—Miller has a great deal of generosity in him. For example, when the moment came for him to go back to America (he was advised to do so by the American consul; as an American national, he had to go back home because the war was coming near), he said to me one day: "My dear George, you've been so kind to me, and I want to give you something." And he produced a diary which he had been keeping during his stay in Greece. I said: "Look here, Henry. But after all, I know that you are going to write a book, and you can't write the book—I mean you might need your notes." He

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said: "No. All those things are here," pointing to his head. I offered to make a typescript copy for him to give him. "No," he said, "a gift must be whole." Well, that's a splendid way of behaving, I think. And I shall never forget that. The diary was a sort of first draft of the *Colossus*. But with more personal explosions. And more jokes, of course.

INTERVIEWER

There are quite a few jokes in the book too.

SEFERIS

The trip to Hydra is splendid and the channel of Poros. Remember? My feeling about Miller is this: of course it's a great thing to have an understanding of the ancient authors; but the first man I admired for not having any classical preparation on going to Greece is Miller. There is such a freshness in him.

INTERVIEWER

The freshness of being ready to take it all in for the first time, you mean?

SEFERIS

I suppose I was the first man to give him a text of Aeschylus, when he decided to go to Mycenae. But of course he doesn't see anything from Aeschylus; he sees, in the plain of Argos, *redskins* while he hears a jazz trumpeter. That is spontaneous behavior. And I admire it.

INTERVIEWER

Jazz trumpeter?

SEFERIS

The jazz trumpeter was inspired, I suppose, by Louis Armstrong. Because he had heard Armstrong on a small gramophone—a quite elementary gramophone—that I had then in my home in Athens. I myself had discovered jazz eight or ten years earlier...

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INTERVIEWER

Before Miller's arrival in Greece. So you taught *him* about jazz?

SEFERIS

I was thirty-two or thirty-three at that time. And I became a jazz addict. I said to myself, after all, you have discovered at the same time the importance of Bach—the great Bach—*and* the importance of jazz. I remember once I said to Mitropoulos: "For me, my dear maestro, jazz is one of the few ways left for us to express feeling without embarrassment." That was in '35. No, '34.

INTERVIEWER

Was there any other writer abroad or in Greece with whom you had a particularly close relationship?

SEFERIS

Its depends on what period you are referring to. For example, I had very close relations with Sikelianos once upon a time. I met him first in 1929, though it did not become a close relationship until after his illness and my return to Greece in 1944. During his illness, Sikelianos was really remarkable, when he had all those crises in his health. While I was serving abroad I would take advantage of my trips to Athens to go and see him. One time I heard that he had just been through a sort of cerebral hemorrhage. I found him at the theater wearing dark glasses—a première at the National Theatre. I said: "Oh Angelo, I am so glad you are here, because I had heard that you were not so well." "My dear," he said, "it is such a splendid thing to have a little ruby on the top of your brain." He meant the hemorrhage. I said to him: "It is a splendid thing that you can talk about it that way. I am so glad." He said: "George, look here. I shall tell you a story during the next intermission." I approached him during the next intermission. He said: "Have you read *Rocambol*?" It's a sort of French thriller. Sikelianos went on: "Once upon a time a woman had thrown vitriol against the face of Rocambol, and

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Rocambol was in danger of losing his eyesight; so he was taken by one of his henchmen to the best specialist in Paris, and the specialist examined him very carefully while the friend of Rocambol was sitting in the waiting room overhearing the conversation of the doctor. And the doctor's conclusion was: "Sir, you have to choose between two things: either lose your eyesight or be disfigured." There was a moment of heavy silence, then the voice from the waiting room, the voice of the friend of Rocambol was heard: "Rocambol has no need of his eyesight."

INTERVIEWER

Tell me more about Sikelianos. So little is known about him outside Greece.

SEFERIS

Another thing which I have mentioned in writing, at the time of his death. He had a great crisis in Athens and I rushed to see him; I was very anxious; he had collapsed in the house of a friend. And again, the same splendid reaction. I said to him: "My dear Angelo, are you all right?" He said: "I'm all right. But I had a splendid experience. I saw the absolute dark. It was so beautiful."

INTERVIEWER

Did you know Palamas? What kind of man was he?

SEFERIS

You know, it is strange the memories I have kept of people. For example, other people admire Sikelianos for their own special reasons; myself, I was attracted by those tragic and splendid moments of Sikelianos' last years. Now Palamas: one of my last memories of him was when I went to tell him good-bye because I was leaving shortly. During our conversation, he referred to various crazy people mentioned in his poetry and added: "You know, we have many mad people in my family. I wanted once upon a time to write a book called 'To Genos ton Loxon.'" How can we translate that into

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English? "The breed of..."

INTERVIEWER

Of madmen.

SEFERIS

Not quite of madmen. Of "oblique" men.

INTERVIEWER

Oblique men?

SEFERIS

I'm trying to get the precise translation of the word.

INTERVIEWER

Unbalanced men, perhaps.

SEFERIS

I said to him: "Mr. Palamas, it is a pity you *didn't* write such a book." Because I thought it would be a good book. He had an interesting sense of humor.

INTERVIEWER

What do you consider Palamas' most significant contribution to Greek literature?

SEFERIS

Well, I said it in *Dokimes*, but I would repeat: his very important contribution to the Greek language. I mean compared to his, Cavafy's expression seems rather faint, although at certain moments more real.

INTERVIEWER

But the minute you say "although more real"...

SEFERIS

Again, what I appreciate very much in Cavafy is his having started with terrifically unreal poems and then, by insistence

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and work, he found at last his own personal voice. He wrote very bad poems up to his thirty-fourth year. The failure of those poems cannot be translated or communicated to a foreign reader because the language of the translation is always bound to improve them. There is no possibility of translating that sort of thing faithfully.

You know, what I admire—let me put it my own way—what I admire about Cavafy was this: he was a man who starts at a certain age with all signs showing that he's unable to produce anything of importance. And then, by refusing and refusing things which are offered him, in the end he *finds*, he *sees*, as they say; he becomes certain that he's found his own expression. It's a splendid example of a man who, through his refusals, finds his way.

INTERVIEWER

What did he refuse precisely?

SEFERIS

Expressions, and the easy things, verbosity—that sort of thing. Take his poem on ancient tragedy, for example. It is very bad. It is something unbelievable. By putting aside things like that, Cavafy improves his expression up to the end of his life, even up to the last poem he wrote on the outskirts of Antioch: the happenings between the Christians and Julian. And I admire him for going on to the end like that. He's a great example. He had the courage, up to the end of his life, not to admit certain things, to reject them. And that's why I have doubts about all these people who are trying to put into circulation all the rejected writings of Cavafy, unless one is very careful in reading him. You know, that needs a great deal of discernment.

INTERVIEWER

To turn now to the other well-known writer of the older generation, what about Kazantzakis? In the U. S., Cavafy is the poet who's respected by those who are themselves poets—Auden, for instance, and many of the important younger

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American poets; most of them know Cavafy and most of them have a sympathetic attitude towards him. But among students and among those who are just beginning to learn about literature, Kazantzakis is by far the most popular Greek writer, both as poet and as novelist. Increasingly my job is to try to discuss Kazantzakis' work—whether poetry or fiction—without diminishing him.

SEFERIS

I don't wonder. The thing is that one must have a possibility of being in contact with a writer, and that I cannot do in the case of Kazantzakis—a terrible thing for me, you know. I must give you a warning as far as Kazantzakis is concerned. On the one hand, there is his poetry—what is called poetry—and that's the *Odyssey* sequel, of course, and his plays in verse; and on the other hand, there is his prose: the novels. Now, as far as the novels are concerned, I am not competent to judge. I don't know how to speak about the novels. I have not read all of them. I hear from people whom I trust that they are very good, and they may well *be* very good. But the *Odyssey* sequel is another matter. There, although you have interesting passages, I'm afraid there is no poetry in them. I say interesting passages—passages that are informative about the man Kazantzakis; but I don't believe that's poetry, at least not the poetry I believe in.

INTERVIEWER

What about as "idea," quite aside from poetic considerations? As statement of a philosophical or religious position.

SEFERIS

I don't know. I have no idea about philosophical positions and world views. You know, whenever world views begin interfering with writing—I don't know. I prefer world views in the sort of dry, repulsive, and (I don't know how to put it) prosaic way. I don't like people who try to express world views in writing poetry. I remember once I had a reading in Thessalonike, and a philosopher stood up and asked: "But what, af-

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ter all, Mr. Seferis, is your world view?" And I said: "My dear friend, I'm sorry to say that I have no world view. I have to make this public confession to you that I am writing without having any world view. I don't know, perhaps you find that scandalous, sir, but may I ask you to tell me what Homer's world view is?" And I didn't get an answer.

INTERVIEWER

To move on to a more general subject, you said during one of our conversations in Athens that a circumstance which is notable about Greek writers in this century was that so many of them were outside the Kingdom of Greece proper. You mentioned yourself as an instance, having been brought up in Smyrna. Could you comment on the ways your Smyrna origin may have influenced your work or your general role as a man of letters.

SEFERIS

Let me say that I am interested in everything which finds expression in the Greek language and in Greek lands—I mean taking Greek lands as a whole. For example, I was terribly interested, as you know, in what happened in Crete in the 17th century. And in another way, people in Roumania, for example the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, interested me very much—even odd minor people like Kaisarios Dapontes, if you know who he is. I think he was from somewhere in the northern islands, Skopelos of the Sporades, and he lived a long part of his life in the principalities, then Constantinople, and finally he retired to Mt. Athos under the name of Kaisarios. I don't mean that he is a great poet, simply that his way of expressing himself interests me. I don't say that he writes great poetry, but after all, one feels that in those countries in the 18th century, there was such a flourishing of Greek letters. Another monk of Mt. Athos—I'm trying to remember his name—yes, his name was Pamberis, wrote a poem, not a very long one because it would be an impossible achievement to write a long poem under the system he decided to use. He called it "Poiema Karkinikon,"

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so to say, "Poem Cancerous." It was devised so that it could be read from left to right or from right to left, and still attempting to make sense—but a sense so remote that he had to put notes explaining what each line meant. These small details amuse me, you know. And I think that they add to the too professorial image we have of Greek literature. Or again, another text: "The Mass of the Beardless Man." It is a text written in the form of a mock Mass that parodies the Mass in a rather shocking way. It amuses me especially because I don't see enough light comic texts in our literature. Either people refrained from writing such texts, or such texts were eliminated by somber-minded academics.

INTERVIEWER

That's an interesting remark. You've said on another occasion that one thing which you find that the Anglo-Saxon tradition has and no other tradition has is that element of nonsense—an element which is fairly continuous in our literature and which seems always to have existed in some form.

SEFERIS

The Anglo-Saxon tradition is certainly different from ours in that respect; and I believe that no continental country can claim the same kind of nonsense that Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll offer.

INTERVIEWER

You've spent three periods of service in England, spread over the best part of your literary career. Did you find it an especially congenial climate for work?

SEFERIS

Not really. A very good place for me for writing was when I was in Albania, because I was quite unknown there, and very isolated; at the same time I was near Greece, I mean from the language point of view, and I could use my free time to advantage. There were no exhausting social functions.

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INTERVIEWER

What about your acquaintance with English men of letters during your early years in England? You met Eliot, of course.

SEFERIS

No, I had a letter of introduction to Eliot and I rang his office, but the secretary informed me that Eliot was in the United States. It was the time when he was Charles Eliot Norton Professor at Harvard. I never met Eliot nor any other writer in the beginning. First of all, I was rather shy as a person; then, it was a period when I was groping to find my own further expression. In contrast, when I came to England after World War II, my period in the Middle East had created a great many friends among the English, and when I came back to England as Counselor at the Embassy, I had no difficulty at all, because by then I was quite well known in England. It was just after the publication of my first translation into English, *The King of Asine and Other Poems*, in 1948.

INTERVIEWER

During the period of your first official visit to England, I wonder whether you had any contact with English or American literature that you found particularly exciting along with Eliot's work.

SEFERIS

I think a very instructive man for me, as I found out afterwards, was W. B. Yeats. But I'm talking about Yeats' early period. After all, you see, I had endeavored to exploit folklore much as Yeats did.

INTERVIEWER

What about American literature? Did you have any favorite American authors in your formative years?

SEFERIS

It is an odd thing for us—I suppose that happens to everybody abroad—I mean one gets into literature and art by

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chance. For example, I don't remember on what occasion I came to know Archibald MacLeish. And I translated him, as a matter of fact. I think I am the first man to have translated him in Greece. Then there was Marianne Moore. I had translated Marianne Moore before the war also. "The Monkeys," "To a Snail."

INTERVIEWER

You say you encountered them by accident. What was the accident?

SEFERIS

Oh, I don't know. Some review where I saw the poems, I don't remember which one. And again, Ezra Pound. I had already translated three *Cantos* before the war.

INTERVIEWER

When I brought up American literature, I was really thinking about the older American poets: Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, for example.

SEFERIS

I knew Walt Whitman. Because I started with French literature, and Walt Whitman was translated into French early enough to be available to me. And then Henry Miller had an admiration for Whitman. He gave me many hints about him. That was quite near the outbreak of the war, of course. But I keep reading Whitman, as, in my youth, I was reading Edgar Allan Poe.

INTERVIEWER

Now that you're about to go back to Greece, do you have anything that you can say about this particular visit to the United States—which is your third visit, if I'm not mistaken—anything about your impressions of this country.

SEFERIS

My third visit to America has been the most important of

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all, this visit; it has been more substantial than the others. I don't believe that visiting New York helps you to understand America. Curiously enough, I am now in the middle of a wood in a remote place, Princeton, yet I have been able to see and understand more of America from this remote place than if I were in a great center.

INTERVIEWER

Of course Princetonians don't think Princeton is all that remote.

SEFERIS

Well, I mean for others who are trying, when they are traveling, to see cosmopolitan centers, it might look remote. And after all, we travelers do not attend courses at the University.

INTERVIEWER

What have you seen in particular during this visit that has impressed you?

SEFERIS

I don't want to mention things which impress me, you know. Nobody knows what impresses him on the spot. I mean it takes time to be elaborated somehow by memory.

INTERVIEWER

Did you get some work done?

SEFERIS

Yes, I think I did. I can't say. I don't know how to speak about work done. I have the impression that one can speak about work done only when the work is finished. I am not inclined to speak about my work during the period of elaboration. But in any case, there is an inner feeling that you have not lost your time. Which is something. I mean I want to be honest with you: I cannot mention anything really done. The only thing I can mention to you—and I'm not going to men-

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tion the substance of it—is that I wrote a poem of two lines.

INTERVIEWER

You just received a volume of Eugene McCarthy's poems. I found that rather moving: to discover that he had in fact written a volume of poems, and apparently during his campaign last year.

SEFERIS

Yes, why not? I mean I can very well understand that. If there was a period of euphoria, there is no reason why it shouldn't happen in poetry at the same time that it happens in a chapter of politics. One of my poems, "Thrush," was written after a terribly active period of my life—I mean politically active, because I was principal private secretary to the Regent of Greece, just before going to Poros. Of course poems do not appear like an eruption by a volcano; they need preparation. And I think back on "Thrush," I can well mark notes, lines, which I had started writing during the previous year, that most active year. Nevertheless, I remember days when the job was killing, because I was not a politician, I was just a servant, a public servant, and I remember days when I started going to my office at something like eight o'clock in the morning and returned back home the next day at five o'clock in the morning, without having had any meal or any sleep. I mention that, of course, not in order to move you but in order to show you that, after all, time was pressing then. But I was also writing. Of course, there are other things which influenced my work at that time, and among other things I might mention the fact that I returned to my country after a great period of longing, at the end of the war.

INTERVIEWER

Do you feel that, in addition to the lines you wrote, the poem was gestating in some significant way during this very active period, so that when you went to Poros it could come out as the coherent work it is in a relatively short period? A month of vacation, wasn't it?

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SEFERIS

Two months. The first long holiday I ever had during my career—the longest one.

INTERVIEWER

And you were able to write the poem—and it is a long poem—in effect during one sitting: the long sitting of that two-month vacation?

SEFERIS

No. You'll find the story of my writing that poem in the diary of this period, the period of '46 on Poros. I used to go for a swim—no, first I would cut wood in the garden (which was a huge garden), then go to the sea, and then work up to night, up to darkness, which started at seven o'clock. And it is strange, you know, how—excuse me for talking like this—I noticed how one is cleansed progessively by such a life. For example, I noticed that cleansing in my dreams, as I mentioned in this diary which has been recently published.

INTERVIEWER

I have only one more really general topic to bring up. I wonder if you feel, as the result of your rather unique position in Greek letters now—I suppose any poet has a unique position in his country once he's won the Nobel Prize—if you feel that this in any way has affected your sense of a public role as a man of letters as distinct from your private role as a poet—any responsibility you may feel towards younger poets, for instance, towards the cultural life around you, or any position you may sense you have to maintain in relation to your country.

SEFERIS

I should from the beginning tell you quite bluntly—if I can say it in English—that the Nobel Prize is an accident, no more than an accident. It's not an appointment. And I have no feeling that I have been appointed to any sort of function. It is just an accident which one has to try and forget as soon as

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possible. Otherwise, if you are overdazzled by that sort of thing, you get lost and founder. At the time I won the prize, there was a sort of—how can I put it in English?—a sort of Cassandra-like critic who wrote that Seferis should be very careful because he's going to be completely dried up as far as his work is concerned and even die from various illnesses since that sort of thing happens to people who have that kind of success. He was just exaggerating the one side of it, without considering, after all, what showed in the way I reacted to the prize. For example, I said in Stockholm to my judges (or whatever they are): "Gentlemen, I thank you"—this at the end of a sort of lecture I gave there—"for allowing me, after a long effort, to be *nobody*, to be unnoticed, as Homer says of Ulysses." And I was quite sincere. After all, I don't recognize the right of anybody to take you by the back of your neck and throw you into a sort of ocean of empty responsibilities. Why, that's scandalous after all.

INTERVIEWER

Now let's move away from the issue of the Nobel Prize. Greece, being a small country, seems to me to have always had, somehow, a tradition (it's an informal tradition, unlike the British one) of an unofficial but generally recognized poet laureate—a feeling among poets and their followers that there is one spokesman for poetry in each particular generation—even if the role of spokesman is sometimes self-assumed. Sikelianos, for example, played that role. And in his day, so did Palamas.

SEFERIS

Well, yes, God bless them, but I'm sorry to say that I never felt I was the spokesman for anything or anybody. There are no credentials which appoint anybody to be a spokesman for something. Now others consider that a sort of function which must be performed; but I think that is, after all, why I have written so little. I've never felt the obligation; I have to consider only that I am not dried up as a poet and to write. I mean that has been my feeling from the very beginning. I remem-

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ber when I published my first book, there were lots of people who said: "Mr. Seferis, you must now try to show us that you can do more." I answered them: "Gentlemen, you must consider that every poem published by me is the last one. I never have any feeling about its continuation." My last poem. And if I write another one, it's a great blessing. Now how much I have worked in order to produce the next poem, or how much I have not worked, is another matter—a private matter. Others think that they are the voices of the country. All right. God bless them. And sometimes they've been very good in that function.

INTERVIEWER

Joyce felt that way a bit. I'm thinking of the famous remark by Stephen Dedalus at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, "to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race."

SEFERIS

I can give you another example. In my youth there was an enormous amount of discussion about the problem of knowing, or trying to define, what is Greek and what is not Greek—praising one thing as Greek and condemning something else as un-Greek: trying, in short, to establish "the real" Greek tradition. So I wrote, "Greekness is the sum of the authentic works which are going to be produced by Greeks." We cannot say that we have *some* works creating the conscience of Greece. We see a line, but surrounded by large margins of darkness. It isn't simple. I don't know what my voice is. If others, for the time being, consider that it is *their* conscience, so much the better. It's up to them to decide. It's not up to me to impose; because you cannot be a sort of dictator in these matters.

INTERVIEWER

Some would think your's the healthy attitude, but there are other people who feel that a Nobel Prize winner, especially when he is the only one the country has ever had, *ought* to

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be a spokesman and a public conscience.

SEFERIS

It might be so, but, after all, one takes the attitude which is imposed on him by his nature, or whatever you call it. At the same time, I have never forced myself to write anything which I didn't think necessary. When I say "necessary," I mean which I *had* to express or be smothered.

INTERVIEWER

Well, I've run out of questions. Since you don't have any grand advice for the younger generation, I've nothing more to ask you.

SEFERIS

I *have* advice.

INTERVIEWER

Oh you *do*? Good.

SEFERIS

I have the following advice to give to the younger Greek generation: to try to exercise themselves as much as they can in the modern Greek language. And not to write it upside down. I have to tell them that in order to write, one must believe in what one does, not seeming to believe that one is believing something. They must remember that the only job in which one cannot lie is poetry. You can't lie in poetry. If you are a liar, you'll always be discovered. Perhaps now, perhaps in five years, in ten years, but you are going to be discovered eventually if you are lying.

INTERVIEWER

When you speak of lying, you're speaking first of all about lying against your emotional...

SEFERIS

I don't know what I mean. Perhaps it is an emotional thing.

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In the reality of one's thoughts. I don't know. I mean there is a special sound about the solid, the sound thing. You knock against it, and it renders a sort of sound which proves that it is genuine.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think every writer always knows himself whether the sound he hears is genuine or not?

SEFERIS

No. It is difficult to say. But he must somehow have an instinct—a guiding instinct—which says to him: "My dear boy, my dear chap, be careful; you are going to fall. You are exaggerating at this moment." And then, when he hears that, he should not take a drug in order to say to himself: "Why, you are all right, my dear." You are not all right, my dear, at all.

—EDMUND KEELEY

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The Basketball Diaries

Jim Carroll

Fall 1963

It was the warmest Oct. day out that I ever saw today, so we skipped practice (Tony and Yogi and I) and we decided to take a little ride down to the ferry and over to Staten Island. After polishing off a hero at LUCY'S we hopped on the back fender of the 2nd Ave. bus and rode down to the ferry basin. Once I fell off a bus like that on a sharp turn and almost got my balls crushed under the back wheel but this ride was smooth enough and we got off and deposited our nickels in the turnstiles and were off. Just as the boat is pulling out of the dock, Tony takes out a bottle of CARBONA cleaning fluid and a few rags and suggests that we do a little sniffing to get high. I was up for this idea because Carbona is one of the finest cheap highs you can get, even stronger than model glue. We slipped up to the top deck of the ship and wet our rags and raised them to our faces. After about four deep whiffs we were sailing someplace else, bells ringing through my ears and little lights flashing through my eyes. I pictured myself paddling across a river with black water, only the canoe was going backwards instead of forwards, with clouds that were faces laughing spooky fun house laughs which wouldn't stop echoing. More sniffs and more freaky visions, the ringing bell sound always getting louder the more I breathe the stuff into my lungs. I kept it up for about ten minutes, but by then I was getting too dizzy to handle it and I had to fling down the rag and make it to the side rail, sick as possible. I began puking wildly. My eyes felt like bowling balls and they were

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watering like mad. Tony and Yogi had done themselves in too and they ran over to join in the ceremony. Then we recovered enough to hear shouts coming from the bottom deck and wiping off our eyes we realized that we had zeroed in over the head of some dude. More unfortunate was the fact that the guy was fantastically huge, and man, did he look pissed off. We wasted no time in making it to the nearest hiding spot, knowing that guy would be up after us any second. We got to the other side of the boat and did a quick Steve MacQueen act, over the rail and down to the lowest deck. Then we ducked into the bathroom and into the last toilet stall, locking the door and sweating our balls off. We hung on in there, reading the little penciled-in obscenities until the boat docked. After about ten minutes more waiting, we sent Yogi out to see if the coast was clear. He came back and signaled us out and we ran our asses off the boat, through the terminal and onto the nearest bus. We came to a nice park somewhere in the middle of the island and played ball with the local weaklings all day, taking on everyone, even guys as old as 16 or so. It was almost dark when we caught our ferry back to the city again, keeping a sharp lookout for our friend and vowing we'd never sniff that stuff on any ferry again.

Fall 1963

They finally took away old Mrs. McNulty today. She was the incredibly nutty lady who lived right across the alley from our window in the building. She had a very scary habit of going to her sink every night in her bra and panties and offering Mass over it as if it were her altar. She knew the Mass inside out, but she would interject incredible obscenities whenever the Virgin Mary's name came up, or Christ's name too, for that matter. She had all the standard equipment for the Mass, like a gold chalice and all that, but at the part that appeared to be what the Catholics considered the consecration or whatever, she would shove the thing between her legs and yell, "Suck me, eat my puss, God." Things like that, you know. The things she said about Mary were the worst always,

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and I would watch everything quite clearly and really shudder; not that I was ever really religious (not since I was eight actually, when one day I went into a church for the first time and tried to make friends with God by asking him to come home with me so we could watch the World Series together) but because I couldn't understand at all what the fuck could ever possess someone to do something as fruity as that. Man, she really let fly some nights, yelling so that everyone in the building almost could hear her. When I told some friends about her, a lot of them wanted to come over to see her, thinking the scene was really sexy or something. But she was an old lady, about 65 or so, so the sight of her dressed like that and freaking like she did was too much disgust, I always had to turn away. I guess someone complained once too often lately and I saw her being tucked into an ambulance, very calm about it, while I was coming back from school today.

Summer 1964

Every crowd of young guys has its little games to prove if you're punk or not. My cousin in Newark plays "chickie," which is two cars heading toward each other at about 80 m.p.h. and the first driver to swerve out of the way is, of course, the chicken. On the lower East Side they'd make you press a lit cigarette onto your arm and have it burn all the way to the filter without the slightest flinch. Up here in upper Manhattan, guys jump off cliffs into the Harlem River, where the water is literally shitty because right nearby are the giant sewer deposits where about 1/2 million toilets empty their goods daily. You had to time each jump, in fact, with the "shit lines" as they flowed by. That is, there were these lines of water crammed with shit along the surface about five feet long that would come by about once every forty seconds. So you had to time your jump in between the lines just like those jitterbugs down in Acapulco got to time their jumps so they hit the water just as the wave is beginning its break.

It was also a big thrill and a standard joke whenever a really giant scumbag floated by. Man, did we see some whoppers;

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the people in this sewer district sure have big dicks. One time we even saw a dead pig float by (the animal, that is). He must have come off the Hudson from upstate, freed himself from a livestock barge and drowned maybe. It was scary white and jelly-like, bloated to double its normal size. I remember the sight of it cruising by and (really) no one swam for about three days.

So today we met in the park near the basketball courts, Johnny, Danny and I, played a few quick games, downed a couple of beers, and headed up the street (Seaman Ave. is the name of the street, in fact, pretty funny name, and I actually know a chick who lives on the corner of Seaman and Cumming Streets, who fucks her weight in guys. But living on a corner with names like that, who could blame her.) Well, we walked our way up to the 225th St. bridge, cross over into the Bronx, shimmy to get down to the railroad tracks to get down to the cut (which is the name of the huge rock you jump off.) Meanwhile, on the way, we're chased by the huge watchdog, a ferocious German shepherd, and we had to run our balls off and climb over another fence to avoid it. So we made it for a change because sometimes we're not so lucky with that mutt and it will tear the leg of your pants off in one chomp, perhaps a good part of your ass with it. Like one day we were with Sam McGiggle and he couldn't make it to the fence in time so we told him to freeze perfectly still and the dog wouldn't bother him. So he statued himself in some insane position and the mutt came up to him, sort of sniffed at him for a second or two, and just as old Sam felt relieved, it bit him accordingly right square in the bum-bum.

Well, we made it to the cut and poked around the bushes at the base to find our hidden swim suits and jocks. (Man, since there were no lockers this was the next best thing.) Then we buried our money in the safest spot, and began to change. Just down to our scivvies, we hear giggles shooting up from behind the bushes and wheel around to find three chicks standing there trying to dig on the show. No other solution, we saw, but to attack, so we whip off our underwear and charge after them, totally naked and slinging jocks around in our

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hands. Their true purity exposed, they were off in the breeze, giggling and peeking back now and then at our free swinging tools. On go our suits and we begin to ascend the cut. The cut is actually only about 12' wide, with the Harlem River on one side, and the Hudson-Harlem Train Line tracks in the rear. It has a series of minor cliffs to jump off, and they gradually get higher until you reach the top, about 85'. Every plateau you jump has its own separate name like Suicide, and Hell's Gate, Angel's Toe and the top, the elite goal that all this bullshit is about, Hell's Angel.

That's where we were, the very top, flat solid rock which has been cracked in part so that small clover-like plants grow out of the crevices. We sat tense, waiting for the sightseeing boat, The Circle Line, to make the turn around the bend down near the bridge and head toward us. That was what really made the jump worthwhile, with all the lame couples like old tourists from Ohio, and nuns, and Japanese executives and other odd N.Y.C. visitors who got fished into paying five beans to sail around the island, watching us go down into the stinking water. Well, Danny was the first, Johnny and I peering over the edge as he made it clear over the first and only obstacle, a small tree that shot out of the rock about five feet below, then straight ahead, hands close at sides, body stiff, and feet locked tightly, hitting the surface missile-like. From up there, it seemed like 5008 feet to the bottom. But Danny had jumped Hell's Angel before, so it was old hat to him, but now it was John's turn, and he, like me, was a rookie at the top. Scared shit and mouth wide, he peeped one more time onto the river, waved at the waiting sightseers, took one step back, five hundred deep breaths, muttered, "Fuck it," then yelled out the same thing, clutched his balls with both hands and jumped. Down he was going, legs spread far apart and jitterbugging like he was doing the Popeye or something, still firmly clutching his crotch. "Bad form," I sighed, as he hit the water, and what a fucking understatement that was. It was pitiful, he hit the water like a fucking octopus, limbs flying everywhere, and the splash contained a smacking sound that hurt all the way up to me at the top of the cliff. When he

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came up to the surface he swam to the shore with one hand paddling and holding his sore, sore ass with the other, so that he was slow enough to get attacked by a fair sized shit line, the whole fucking scene having Danny in stitches over on the shore near the tracks. My turn now, the boat almost passed, all the people at attention yelling for me to do it, the sadistic bastards.

I didn't really think, I didn't even take my sneakers off, I just jumped into this jerky dream that lasted all the way down until I hit the bottom. The feeling isn't movement anyway, but rather being suspended in front of the sheer cliff, mid-air, with the waters rising up sharp and fast at you. I hit water hard, but I didn't go too deep, coming up to see all the sightseers applauding. Then I swam to shore to meet the others and we turned, pulled down our shorts and flashed our moons to the old sightseeing buggers as the boat pulled away and headed for the Hudson. We got dressed and went back (Eddie the old man queer guy peeking into the bushes as we changed, by the way.) I got back to the neighborhood and decided to go home to eat and write and sleep; I know I can always wait to tomorrow to go around and brag and let everyone know what big shit I am and all that.

Fall 1964

It's my first day at the ultra-rich private school that Benny got me a scholarship to come to. I had a hard time trying to figure out what I was doing there, and I got funny looks from everyone and thought how funny it was all those Jewish kids singing away those old Christian tunes like that at the chapel service in the morning. Some teacher in back of me kept poking on my shoulder to get me to sing but I just sat there with a bored look on my face. Before the first class I spoke with a nice enough little guy named Eggie Blaumgarden or something, whose old man owns a big diamond cutting firm, very impressive to me. It turns out that he's a great tennis star (6th in the East for his age) and he's interested in art. "Got a few Renoirs over at my place," he lays on me, "come over for

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dinner sometime and check em out." Sure thing Eggie. Then I got into hot water with Mr. Brothers, fancy Oxford graduate Latin teacher, who freaks out when I answer a question "Yah" instead of "Yes, sir". He keeps me after class and explains how he understands with mounds of sympathy how my family is lowly slobs and all but to discipline myself to proper replies and other classroom etiquette. Sure thing. Then at lunch the head master, Mr Belt, comes over and sits at my table and tells me that my hand should be removed from sight while dining. I thought he meant the hand that I held the fork with, so I sat there for half a minute puzzled until I realized it was the other hand that he was talking about. He's an overly sincere type guy, you know the kind, like a politician, they always wind up screwing you up sooner or later. Frankly I don't dig the guy. I feel like farting and blowing up the 257 yrs. of fine tradition of this place. After lunch I spent a little time in the school trophy room, which is actually a sort of lounge where there are fancy v-shaped sofas and all that and a walnut cabinet with all the school's trophies in it (not many, I might add, in fact, I've got more trophies at home than this place got in 257 yrs.) So I'm minding my own business reading TIME mag. when some guy from my class, Larry Labratory, I think his name is, trys to insist that he was reading the magazine first. "Nice try there, champ," I say, "but I've been sitting here ten minutes now, you see?" So, can you picture this, he actually tries to take the thing from me, the prick, and for lack of a more peaceful solution, I get up and punch him out. His nose bleeding, he gets up and whimpers off, probably to squeak to some teacher. Sure enough, he's back in two minutes, with some old man from the History Dept., pointing dead at me, a handkerchief held up to his bleeding mug. It was only the testimony on my behalf by Eggie Blaumgarden that saved me from getting into a big hassle and being sent down to Mr. Bluster, our principal. Everyone seemed to hate that guy Larry Labratory anyway, so I drew a little applause from the lounge clique when the history guy shook off.

After boring History afternoon classes, I decided to hang

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around awhile and watch the football team work out. Strictly lame, let me tell you, I could round up any ten friends of mine from downtown or uptown and whip their asses. Some senior asked me to hold the ball for him while he practiced field goals, thinking I was just another jerk-ass freshman. I did, and this guy kicked the thing like it was a bag of shit or something. I say, "Let me try one," and he says o.k., thinking he's doing this little punk a big favor. I stepped back, took two strides forward, and breezed one over from 32 yds. (this is in loafers, don't forget) and the guy just knelt there with his mouth hung open, I thought his jock would fall off and roll right down the leg of his clean little uniform. Then I tipped off to the subway, secretly loving everything about this crazy place.

Winter 1964–65

I made it to the subway today and I decided I'd skip school and go right on down to Times Sq. and wander around a little. I got off at 42nd and then hung out with the junkies in Horn & Hardarts for a while. They all shove donuts into coffee and shove it all into their mouths. I go over to the phone and call up the school and speak to the principal's secretary and tell her I'm puking all over my house and I got flies in my throat and all the lies I think I need as quick as I can so she don't hear the sound of the operator and know I'm not home. She seems to swallow the bullshit and I split to dig the streets. That's an advantage to going to a private school, like in public or Catholic school your parents always got to be the ones who call, but in this place I can give them a little buzz every once in a while and be cool and everyone's happy. Actually I remember this jerk ass who went to some strict Catholic school that had a rule that if you were sick your old man had to call up to excuse you and we decided to cut out one nice day so he goes in the pizza place and calls the school and says, "Hello, this is my father, Ralphie Hornado ain't gonna be in today," and he hangs up and comes and tells me it's cool and I look at him and say, "You dumb prick."

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So I buzz across 42nd to Grant's for a birchbeer and then just roam around for a good movie. I get to this empty part of 45th St. and near the side door of some theater is this great chick about 30 yrs. old or so, but really foxy. She gives me the hook and I stroll over and see what's happening. She's heavy make-up and all but she don't come on like a hustler, she suggests she join me at the movies and then we go over to her place. "I got grass, sweetie, you like grass." Sure I dig it, and we find a movie, of all things, *Born Free*. What nonsense, but this chick has led me up into thin air in the balcony and there isn't another person in the whole section. "This is why I picked this flick," she says, "privacy." And with that she lays her hand right across my cock and squeezes. I dig the balcony nooky so I sock my tongue into her mouth and get it on. Everything is humming nice when I reach on up her leg and work my way to her thing when, holy shit, I feel it and realize this freak HAS A COCK. I thought I would freak out on the spot so I jump up and make a mad dash down the stairs and take five about six blocks away from the crazy theater, still shaking. I walked back to the subway dazed but on the way I figure I'll play a few games in the penny arcade so I stop in and shoot a round at the shooting gallery. This one kid who looked the Queens greaser type came over and says "You good?" I tell him I don't know, man what do you say to some shit like that. He says it again, "You good, man, that's all I want to know." Same answer. He asks if I want to bet on getting down eight moving rabbits in ten shots. I say, "Make it $5," and the fish agrees. We put the money up with the spade attendant. I made ten. I take the dude's bread and split, saying, "I'm good." What a wise ass I am, but I wasn't too cool with that drag queen.

Winter 1964-65

I can't make out these private school dudes. Here they are with the richest parents around New York and I can't even lay down my pants in the locker room to take a shower without one of these cats rifling my pockets. Same bullshit with books; anyone that loses one seems to always take a loan on

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mine. I mean, man, I'm the poorest son of a bitch in this institution and I'm getting cleaned out. Just yesterday I got clipped for a five and last week some prick lifted me for a lid of dynamite grass I was about to deal. Today I got all evened out however. I hid down in the wrestling team locker room while my last study period was going on because I never go to that one anyway because it's only some lame senior who runs it and he ain't reporting me to no principals if he knows what's good for his ass. So here I am all of a sudden realizing that the team gets the privilege of early practice and in front of me are all these lockers minus their locks all chock full with goodies. I make the rounds after quietly shutting the door and getting fellow poor classmate David Lang to keep a lookout. I'm up to about fifteen beanos and checking out one of the last wallets left when David whispers from outside, "Get cool, it's Bluster." Shit, someone must have sent the word to Mr. Bluster, the principal, that I cut the study because he never comes to this part of the building unless he's checking for class cutters. I hear him outside reading a list to Lang with my name on it, asking if he's seen anyone. He says no and splits but I'm in one of the favorite hiding spots so I make a last minute move and squeeze into one of the floor lockers and shut the door behind me just barely fitting. I can hear Bluster checking through the door but he seems satisfied and moves on. I try to push the door of this tin trap open but, holy shit, you can't open the motherfucker from the inside! Instant panic of stuffy death with crusty jocks stuffed in my face. I can hardly move and I'm hoping Lang comes back but can't yell because Bluster might still be about. This hole in the wall stinks and I seem to have a javelin or something sticking right up against my balls. Best thing to do is stay calm, I figure, solutions will come. Now ten minutes and no solution coming so I fuck it and start to yell. I hear footsteps in the room. "In here, I'm in this locker here," I mutter and finally the door swings open. I fall out gasping, a madras jock tangling off my nose. It's Ravi Curry, Indian transfer student whose old man is biggie at the U.N., and star of chess team. Ravi is a little confused. I still got that last wallet in my hand so I gotta

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be quick to split. "Thanks Ravi, man, what those fucking fraternities won't do before they let you in," I mumble as I flip the jock to the cat and tip my ass back to that study hall. I got to go to the detention next weekend for missing that fucking class, but I came out fifteen dollars richer even though my balls still hurt from whatever the hell that thing in the locker was. I hope that Ravi don't let any of those giant wrestlers know I was in that room when they got looted because if he does I'm going to kick his ass back to Bombay.

Winter 1965

We just got into town for the very spectacular National High School All-Star Basketball Game. The town by the way is Washington D.C. I got stuck in the same car as Benny Greenleaf, a queer scout from Madison, and the fuck kept playing with my hair all the way down. We stopped at three different Howard Johnson's on the route but I'm still plenty hungry. This team looks in pretty sad shape; Larry Newton was supposed to meet us at the corner of 116th and Lenox but he never showed up. This doesn't bother me too much because now I'll be the starting guard. Benny asks me if I want to be his roommate for $25 a night and I probably would have been until Joe Slapstick, the coach, told Benny to fuck off to another motel. Instead I got stuck with shithead Bobby Bishop, a real jockstrap who came down in a station wagon with his whole family. He hates me but he took me as a roommate because his father won't let him sleep with a spade and I'm the only other white man.

In the evening we're supposed to watch very spectacular films of last year's game but fuck that. Corky Ball, this real light-skinned spade, and I climb out of his window to get laid in the dark section of town. Ball's a great player. I once saw him take a silver dollar from the top of the backboard and he's only about 6'5". He's also a great guy and he had me fixed up with this very fine spade chick. She said she liked my long hair so I told her I write poems too. She asked me if I knew Allen Ginsberg, I told her everybody in N.Y. knew

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Allen Ginsberg. Not too bright Corky thought Allen was another queer Jew basketball scout like Benny Greenleaf. It was a great lay. We didn't make it back to our rooms until about midnight and Joe Slapstick was waiting around for our asses. He told us we couldn't even get dressed for the game 2 nights from now. Bullshit. We both knew we would be starting. There just wasn't enough guys on the team to kick us off. Who was giving a shit about the game anyway? I had plenty of dope and that great little black ass downtown. Slapstick told us to take a shower and nod off. We had two joints each in the shower and went back to my room. Corky beat the ass off Bobby Bishop for squeaking to the coach that we were late. I read "Music" by Frank O'Hara and began thinking about the Plaza Hotel. That poem always reminds me of the Plaza Hotel.

Winter 1965

After very poor breakfast Joe Slapstick calls aside Corky and me and lets us know he is giving us another chance and we would be starting in the game anyway. Benny Greenleaf comes in and plays with my ear and tells me all about the man I'll be guarding on the next night. The man I'm guarding happens to be Art Baylor, a cousin of Elgin Baylor who happens to be my favorite player. Benny says the guy drives a lot and I should keep one leg in his crotch just before he starts to drive. Benny demonstrates and rubs his knee against my balls.

After Benny has demonstrated on every player on the team, someone discovers that Lex Lincoln, a center from Clinton, has incredible amounts of very up pills. We all go to practice stoned. I hit incredible amounts of jump shots in practice and assure myself a starting spot in the game. I practiced passing off because I figured I'd be a playmaker if nothing else. Dean Marmelade hurt his leg and is out for the whole tournament. I read in the Washington newspapers a story about me entitled "Beatnik Basketball Player" telling all about my shoulder-length hair and my strange hobbies off the court. What the fuck is this all about. I get great urge to nod out despite the

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pills. I'm about to go into the room when Joe Slapstick stops me and tells me that I should run the offense because Ball is too dumb. Bishop and his old man are in the room as I get there. They're probably talking about the story in today's paper. I'm sure he hates the idea of a creep like me starting in the game. Bullshit. I sweated my nuts off for that spot so he can go fuck himself.

Winter 1965

Coming back from the Washington trip today, we stopped at a gas station in Benny's car and Yogi went around back to use the bathroom. Corky and I went inside to the Coke machine and used some of the handy slugs we had brought along for such situations. Back to the car again and in a few minutes, Yogi comes whipping out of the bathroom with this big smile on his face. "He probably just beat off, the sneaky fuck," someone crudely observed, but Yogi came running over to the car saying, "Heh, there's a scumbag machine in the bathroom in there." "What the fuck are you talking about?" Willie asked. "I swear they got a scumbag machine in there," and he took out and dangled one large, sure enough, scumbag in front of us. "Pretty great, eh?" "What a goof," I said, and we ran around the back to check it out, Benny included. There it was, 25 cents a pack. I never saw a scumbag machine in N. Y. but somebody explained that they had them in every bathroom in every filling station in the South. Cork put in a quarter and waited for the prize but nothing happened. "Slam it," someone squeaked, and he pounded very hard on the top of the machine. It freaked our minds as the bottom of the thing fell out and thousands of packs of scumbags fell onto the floor. We knew they'd be big sellers to all the lames in our schools who didn't have the balls to go into a drugstore and ask for a pack. In fact dumb old Corky said, "Well, wouldn't you be uptight to go into a drugstore and ask, 'Three scumbags, please?'" We took a little time to explain a few facts to Corky.

Meanwhile, Benny seems right at home in the bathroom

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and he took the opportunity to try and get us to give in to some blow jobs. No one considered the scene very cool for shit like that so, after we checked to make sure we had all the rubbers off the floor, we made it back to the car. Benny sagged back in disappointment and once we got started again the fuck nearly cracked us up into a garbage truck. "Get your mind off my dick and back on the road like a motherfucker," said Willie and it zonked me out when we all looked into the front seat to see his pants down to his ankles and him rubbing Johnson and Johnson baby powder onto his balls. "Jockrash," he explained. "Oh," I nodded. We sniffed a little junk in the back seat so the next few hours were not too literary for this diary but plenty pleasant for the old head. In Baltimore, however, we did run into Corky's cousin in a little food shop. I think she was a fucking whore or something. They rapped for a while and we split, a touching reunion. When we were about an hour from the city, everyone started to blow up the scumbags and send them out the window. At an ice cream stand we gave a few blown up rubbers to a little girl, in fact. "Take the ballons from the nice boys," her mother said, dumb, New Jersey, housewife fucker.

Winter 1965

I've been hanging around lately, with all the other heads in this dreary neighborhood, at this place called "Headquarters," which is actually just the apt. of two friends of mine, Brian and John Browning. It's an amazing place where there are usually anywhere between ten and thirty locals hanging themselves out either laughing insanely from grass giggle fits or simply on the nod from smack. I've lived here from time to time when my parents give me the toss and woke up here this morning, in fact, after a huge hash goof last night. There were about twelve other dudes fell out on the floor when we got each other up for early bird cartoons and the remainder of the hash. Sloppy Eddie wandered in with a case of milk and 36 loaves of bread that he and Willie Appleears clipped from the Grand Union down the block before they opened. Since

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this is supposed to be a quiet, middle class white Catholic section of the city the suckers still leave those things in front of the stores in the open when they make their deliveries. Too bad they don't leave out a couple of pounds of baloney too because we had to go buy that at the all night deli for our morning sandwiches. We plan a big day (Brian and I) of going up to 168th St. to get ourselves a little codeine cough medicine for a nice long Saturday afternoon nod.

After silly hash goofs with other loony heads Brian and I split and taxi to 168th for the junk juice, but to no avail because the place we hit turns us down because the man's been bugging him about selling it to minors (you're supposed to be 21 to cop this stuff). After two more turnaways we almost give up hope when Brian decides to give a call to old Johnny Murry, whose been drinking six bottles a day since he was 15. "Try the real old guy on 163rd, he's cool and he's good for as many as you want; took a shopping bag's worth myself yesterday." Good old John. We hit 163rd and see the place he described right in the shadows of the ballroom where Malcolm X was gunned down not too long ago. We wait outside and discuss the fake names we're gonna use in the book you got to sign when you buy this stuff. Brian goes in first and signs the book "James Bond" as he's paying his 2 dollars, then he exits and gives me the o.k. I enter calmly, "One bottle of Robetussin, please..." but the old man behind the counter was already putting the stuff in the bag and getting out the book from the minute I walked in. He got the stuff right next to him on the shelf, in fact. I sign the book, "Abe Lincoln," and give the guy two beans but he holds on to the bottle. I figured I blew with my super fake John Jay, but instead he looks at me and says, "No good, I'm afraid Abe already got a bottle this morning," and he points it out to me that some other medicine head already filled that one. "Oops, I say and erase it and scribble in "Wilt Chamberlain." He hands over the bag and I whistle out. We decide that two bottles is nicer then one so Brian enters again and signs it "George Washington." He's cool for another score. I go and write in "Al Swinburne" hoping there's no literary customers

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about and I get my second bottle. What a strange little old man. I really think that he thinks we're on the level. But at the rate he's going, he'll be retired soon just on medicine sales. There were six cats heading toward that store when we left and they all gave us the cute "I can dig it" face as they passed us and saw our little bags.

We caught a bus back down to Headquarters, got ten beers at the deli because they enhance the head with medicine, and we picked a quiet corner in the living room and downed the syrup that was going to put us stacked right over the little day to day hassles of our post puberty years. It has a thick taste and all, but you can bear it because you know what's coming after it. Actually, everyone else has split the apt. by now to dig a little touch tackle (except for resident junkie, Jimmy Dantone, who's on the deep nod anyway) so we can enjoy ourselves in peace and quiet. Nothing worse then a loud mouth grass head when you're trying for a nice codeine head. We wait for the stuff to hit and Brian tells me about the little old man and woman down the block that have been drinking this stuff ever since they ran out of the old sex drive a few years back. Half an hour gone past now and Brian asks if it's hitting. "Just coming on," I tell him, and that was the last thing either of us muttered for seven hours when we both looked up to take a sip of beer and Brian says, "Do you feel it?" and I just mutter "Yeah, I feel it." What an understatement, I was so zonked that I'd let whole cigarettes burn down to the filter and burn my fingers without taking one drag. We had about six hours more of good solid nods and then sat around and rapped slowly about all our little visual dreams that passed in our heads clear as movies.

Spring 1965

Being a big time basketball star and all around hip motherfucker at a private school, I get to meet a lot of out of sight private school chicks, all of them action and plenty rich to boot. I went to visit my current girlfriend, Hedi Hunter, today because it's Friday and every Friday her parents go out for big night on the town leaving the apt. to just Hedi and I

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and about fifty maids and butlers. She lives over on Sutton Place overlooking the East River in about an eighteen room penthouse. Her old man is a big wheel at MGM or something and her old lady owns mucho racehorses and stuff like that. I wouldn't mind putting a little make on her moms as a matter of fact, she's early forties but still in great shape. So anyway, I tool in and nod to the doorman who knows me by now and lets me right up without the usual C.I.A. bit they usually give you in these places. The elevator cat is a tall spade who used to play semi-pro ball so we rap a lot until I reach the top, get out, give a ring, flip my beret to Harry, the butler, and get greeted by Hedi, all sexy in her great dress. We eat a little Italian food in the dining room then go up to her room which pans right out over the river with its slow barges and ugly boroughs that surround it. I whip out a little hash and she tosses me her excellent pipe and in ten minutes the view is an awful lot more pleasing outside. Construction is some heavy stuff over in Long Island City, all those huge girders just sticking up in that old sky like air knives. But enough for the view and we wrap up for some great nooky and muff away for an hour or so. I never get tired of this scene though I've been coming here for the last two months. The rest of the night we just sit around on Hedi's big bed naked and watch goofy Peter Seller's movies on big color t.v. I show her action shot of me in the Times while scoring forty against McBurney yesterday. She beams and we fuck again. It's a goof, all this stuff. I'm gonna bring all the dirt heads from old Madison Square Boys' Club up here some night; they'll freak out in one second. Finally I realize that I got to meet some friends uptown soon so I split about midnight after checking out what pills I can rob out of her old man's medicine cabinet. I got about eight ups and a lot of downers. I give Hedi the big kiss, munch on a pear and cut out.

Winter 1966

Got up early this Sat. morning for a change, got up to meet Al Dolan who is going to come with me down to the Amer-

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ican Legion Post on 207th St. so we can hustle some bread. We got there and Al keeps the boss man busy while I swipe a dozen raffle books so we can sell them around here for $2 a book. It wasn't any hassle slipping away the books off the table and into the cut-away inner lining of my coat while Al rapped some shit to the guy about how rude the raffle sellers that came to his building were and that he was here to issue a complaint. The old fish offered his sweet apologies to Al and out we went, $24 worth of raffles in my trusty inner lining.

We started selling around Sherman Ave. and got rid of 4 books on that street alone. The donkey Irish around here would buy anything in the name of God's Holy Legion so this, you see, is easy bread for crooks like us on any given gloomy Sat., too wet for ball games in the park and too broke for drugs or drinkies.

So our luck began to dwindle a bit as we hit the Jewish section of the neighborhood up the hill in ritzy Overlook Terrace, but, still, within an hour or two we were both down to one book each and anxious to get rid of them so we could go get high somewhere. So we're working this building back down on 204th St. and I get rid of my last book and turn to Al with appealing eyes, but he has one book left to go. He raps on a door and out comes this piece of twat older woman in a tiny little frilly nightgown, oh my lord, what a pair of tits has she! "Can I do something for you boys?" she asks. I could have choked on the spot. I chime in, (since Al has gone into semi-petrification) "Well, my friend here and I are selling these raffles and you can win a brand new Mustang in the drawing next week if you take a chance with one book, price $2." "I'm afraid I'm out of cash right now," she said, "but would your friend and you like to come in for a drink anyway; you *do* drink, don't you?" Yes indeedie we do. Yes, and we go right in and sit right over on the couch as we wait for her to come back with two tall screwdrivers, sitting right between the two of us. Call me Oedipus if you will, but I was piping, older ladies really turn me on and by now we knew she was for real and not some crazy old lady in Grand Central Station or something that gets the thrill out of leading you

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into some abandoned part of the station and then yelling for the National Guard when you come near her. So halfway through the drinks she reaches her hand down our pants and twiddles away to our things, tuga-tug tuga. "Nice tall young men, ain't you?" What a bonus this is, and what a hard-on I've got ... tuga-tuga-tug. Zippers down... tug... I won't describe too much... tugatugtuga, except that she was a hand-job freak and she just kept tugging away as we went to play on her body. There's nothing like unexpected sex, especially when selling raffles for the American Legion, so we both came in a matter of minutes, she licking her fingers off and zippering back up our pants just like in the dirty books I used to hide under my rug a few years before. Actually I think they're still there. But that was that, and out the door we went, invited back anytime. Nice lady, and you would be surprised at the number of women like her. Some just like to tease you by answering the door in skimpie outfits and all, but others actually invite you in and follow up. Any salesman knows this is true, not just a story in the movies, and you can bet I got her apt. number in my head right now. But Al still has one book to go and here he is still trying to get rid of it. Finally he loses control and when some old lady don't answer the door, he starts yelling like crazy otto or something and saying how she hates the church and how doomed she is in the name of the Lord and pounding away all along. Then she opens up the peekhole on her door and tells Al that he better be cool or else she's gonna call the man on him. Al goes right up to the peekhole instead and starts making incredible faces at the old bugger and, dig this, she pokes a giant pencil right into Al's mug, drawing blood from all over the lip. I had to laugh my nuts apart at the genius of this lady, but Al seemed to fail to get the joke and after spitting a giant goober all over the old bag's door, he ran out of the house and into the street, raging like some insane monk. With Al's lip pouring with blood, we decided to fuck the last book and pool our earnings for a spoon of cocaine. And that's exactly what we did and for the rest of the day we ran around rapping with that great cocaine buzz and tinge and feeling just fine.

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Spring 1966

Willie Bender, the king of the drunks in this neighborhood, kicked off today. They found him dead on a park bench right across the street from the Bucket Of Blood, the only bar in the whole of Manhattan that would still give him credit. It was a sad end of an era in a way. Willie was famous for going on the wagon for one month or so and then freaking onto a four or five month binge that would mean almost 2 qts. of straight whiskey a day. He drank like a fish. Lots of taste too. "No wino me," he'd say, "give me Johnny Walker Red or go fuck yourself." He was a friendly son of a bitch, never a bitch loaded or not. He'd think nothing of going drinking on the park benches with us when we were still too young to drink in the bars and he could rap right along without sounding like a shithead boring drunk. He lived in the park, as a matter of fact, in one of the prettiest sections, where he would refer to a huge green field as his living room and a bench right beside it as his bedroom. If anybody was ever caught on that bench, he would attack them right off it, then sit around and weep that people had no respect invading a person's bedroom like that. He knew the Cloisters inside out, and he had theories on the reflections of varying social and political conditions as an influence on French sculpture from one century to another. These theories, I hate to say, were completely wrong, as I pointed out to him one day, and he wouldn't speak to me for a week. Everyone at Headquarters chipped in tonight to get him a wreath, though it's doubtful anyone will be able to get up the bread for a wake for the poor guy.

Summer 1966

In ten minutes it will make four days about that I've been nodding on this ratty mattress up here in Headquarters. Haven't eaten except for three carrots and two Nestle's fruit and nut bars and both my forearms sore as shit with all the little specks of caked blood covering them. My two sets of gimmicks right along side me in the slightly bloody water in the plastic

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cup on the crusty linoleum, probably used by every case of hepatitis in upper Manhattan by now. Totally zonked, and all the dope scraped or sniffed clean from the tiny cellophane bags. Four days of temporary death gone by, no more bread, with its hundreds of nods and casual theories, soaky nostalgia (I could have got that for free walking along Fifth Ave. at noon), at any rate a thousand goofs, some still hazy in my noodle. In one nod I dreamt I was in a zoo, inside a fence where, down from a steep stone incline, was a green pond filled with alligators. It seemed at one point I was about to be attacked. About ten gators surfaced and headed slowly up the incline, staring directly at me. But just when I seemed pinned against the fence, instead of lunging at me they just opened their huge jaws in slow motion and yelled, "Popcorn." At this point a little zoo keeper shuffled out and tossed huge bags of popcorn onto the water. I ducked out through the hole that suddenly appeared in the fence.

Zonked, but I've been slugging away at orange juice all along, anyway, for vitamin C and dry mouth. I just crawl out of the bed at first; don't even attempt my human posture. Think about my conversation with Brian: "Ever notice how a junkie nodding begins to look like a fetus after a while?" "That's what it's all about, man, back to the womb." I get up and lean on a busted chair. Jimmy Dantone comes running in and grabs me, "Those guys that we sold the phoney acid to the other day are after our asses if they don't get back the bread." "Go tell them I hate them," I tell him. He splits. A wasted peek into the mirror, I'm all thin as a wafer of concentrated rye. I wish I had some now with a little Cheez Whiz on it. I can feel the window light hurting my eyes; it 's like shooting pickle juice. What does that mean? Nice June day out today, lots of people probably graduating today. I can see the Cloisters with its million in medieval art out the bedroom window. I got to go in and puke.

Editor's Note: "The Basketball Diaries" are selections from writings begun in 1963, when the author was thirteen, and continuing until 1966.

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The New Spirit

John Ashbery

I thought that if I could put it all down, that would be one way. And next the thought came to me that to leave all out, would be another, and truer, way.

clean-washed sea

The flowers were.

These are examples of leaving out. But, forget as we will, something soon comes to stand in their place. Not the truth, perhaps, but—yourself. It is you who made this, therefore you are true. But the truth has passed on

to divide all.

Have I awakened? Or is this sleep again? Another form of sleep? There is no profile in the massed days ahead. They are impersonal as mountains whose tops are hidden in cloud. The middle of the journey, before the sands are reversed: a place of ideal quiet.

You are my calm world. This is my happiness. To stand, to

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go forward into it. The cost is enormous. Too much for one life.

There are some old photographs which show the event. It makes sense to stand there, passing. The people who are there—few, against this side of the air. They made a sign, were making a sign. Turning on yourself as a leaf, you miss the third and last chance. They don't suffer the way people do. True. But it is your last chance, this time, the last chance to escape the ball

of contradictions, that is heavier than gravity bringing all down to the level. And nothing be undone.

The memory of a stain, enacting the statute. It is the law to think now. To think becomes the law, the dream of young and old alike moving together where the dark masses grow confused. We must drink the confusion, sample that other, concerted, dark effort that pushes not to the light, but toward a draft of dank, clammy air. We have broken through into the meaning of the tomb. But the act is still proposed, before us,

it needs pronouncing. To formulate oneself around this hollow, empty sphere... To be your breath as it is taken in and shoved out. Then, quietly, it would be as objects placed along the top of a wall: a battery jar, a rusted pulley, shapeless wooden boxes, an open can of axle grease, two lengths of pipe... We see this moment from outside as within. There is no need to offer proof. It's funny... The cold, external factors are inside us at last, growing in us for our improvement, asking nothing, not even a commemorative thought. And what about what was there before?

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This is shaped in the new merging, like ancestral smiles, common memories, remembering just how the light stood on the water that time. But it is also something new. Outside, can't you hear it, the traffic, the trees, everything getting nearer. To end up with, inside each other, moving upward like penance. For the continual pilgrimage has not stopped. It is only that you are both moving at the same rate of speed and cannot apprehend the motion. Which carries you beyond, alarmingly fast out into the confusion where the river pours into the sea. That place that seems even farther from shore...

There is nothing to be done, you must grow up, the outer rhythm more and more accelerate, past the ideal rhythm of the spheres that seemed to dictate you, that seemed the establishment of your seed and the conditions of its growing, upward, someday into leaves and fruition and final sap. For it is to be transcended... The pace is softening now, we can see why it had to be. Our older relatives told of this. It happened a long time ago but it had to happen, which is why we are here now telling about it. If you thought you received more than your share, you could tell about that too. It was a free forum where each one came to cast off these irksome memories, strip down for the night that had preceded us to this place. Surely this was, also, a time of doing, not harvesting, for nothing was ripe, nothing had then been planted... An active time, tense at the forehead and nostrils before sleep, pushing into the near piles of sticks and leaves and being gently nudged by them in return. A segment, more, of reality. This must be remembered too, it is even very important, but will the memory call itself to the point of being? For it is more tired than anything else. And so it slips away, like the face on a deflated balloon, shifted into wrinkles, permanent and matter-of-fact, though a perversion of itself.

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Because life is short
We must remember to keep asking it the same question
Until the repeated question and the same silence become answer
In words broken open and pressed to the mouth
And the last silence reveal the lining
Until at last this thing exist separately
At all levels of the landscape and in the sky
And in the people who timidly inhabit it
The locked name for which is open, to dust and to no thoughts
Even of dying, the fuzzy first thought that gets started in you and then there's no stopping it.
It is so much debris of living, and as such cannot be transmitted
Into another, usable substance, but is irreducible
From these glares and stony silences and sharp-elbowed protests.
But it is your landscape, the proof that you are there,
To deal with or be lost in
In which the silent changes might occur.

It's just beginning. Now it's started to work again. The visitation, was it more or less over. No, it had not yet begun, except as a preparatory dream which seemed to have the rough texture of life, but which dwindled into starshine like all the unwanted memories. There was no holding on to it. But for that we ought to be glad, no one really needed it, yet it was not utterly worthless, it taught us the forms of this our present waking life, the manners of the unreachable. And its judgments, though harmless and playful, were yet the form of utterance by which judgment shall come to be known. For we judge not, lest we be judged, yet we are judged all the same, without noticing, until one day we wake up a different color, the color of the filter of the opinions and ideas everyone has ever entertained about us. And in this form we must prepare, now, to try to live.

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It is not easy at first. There are dark vacancies the light of the hunter's moon does little to attenaute. Ever thought about the moon, how well it fits what it has to light? And those lacquer blobs and rivers of daylight, shaken out of a canister—so unmanageable, so undigestible... Well, isn't that the point? No, but there comes a point when what is to be revealed actually conceals itself in casting off the mask of its identity, when the identity itself is revealed as another mask, and a lesser one, antecedent to that we had come to know and accept. You think of clean legends, of this waking as penetrating a solid block of day. But day is there to assure you that you can't have this in another way, as you could with the films and shadows of night, to tell you that your mutually amused half-acceptance is not the wrong way to start, at any rate, that any breathing is to be breathing into each other, and imperfect, like all apprehended things.

Nevertheless the winter wears on and death follows death. I've tried it, and know how the narrowing-down feeling conflicts with the feeling of life's coming to a point, not a climax but a point. At that point one must, yes, be selective, but not selective in one's choices if you see what I mean. Not choose this or that because it pleases, merely to assume the idea of choosing, so that some things can be left behind. It doesn't matter which ones. I could tell you about some of the things I've discarded but that wouldn't help you because you must choose your own, or rather not choose them but let them be inflicted on and off you. This is the point of the narrowing-down process. And gradually, as the air gets thinner as you climb a mountain, these things will stand forth in a relief all their own—the look of belonging. It is a marvelous job to do, and it is enough just to approximate it. Things will do the rest. Only then will the point of not having everything become apparent, and it will flash on you with such dexterity and such dreadfulness that you will wonder how you lived before—as though a valley hundreds of miles in length and full of orchards and all sorts of benevolent irregularities of

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landscape were suddenly to open at your feet, just as you told yourself you could not climb a step higher. This casual, poorly seen new environment (but how gladly you are aware of imperfect vision, this time!) is to be the new kind of arbitrariness for you, one that protects and promotes without ever leaving the time-inspired lesions of the old, toward which you struggled so hard without knowing it. These are vanished with the saw-toothed anomalies of time itself, and an open, moist, impregnable order of the day—kind, generous and protective—surrounds you as the artless gestures of a beautiful girl surround her with nobility which may never be detected, the fountain of one's life. And one never need wish to see it, for its truth does not matter, and is unimaginable.

You were always a living
But a secret person

As much into life
Yet not wanting to "presume"
Was the insurance
That life churned thick in the after-feeling
And so, even more, a sign of what happens today,
The glad mess, the idea of striking out.

Such particulars you mouthed, all leading back into the underlying question: was it you? Do these things between people partake of themselves, or are they a subtler kind of translucent matter carrying each to a compromise distance painfully outside the rings of authority? For we never knew, never knew what joined us together. Perhaps only a congealing of closeness, deserving of no special notice. But then the eyes directing out, living into their material and in that way somehow making more substance than before, and yet the outward languid motion, like girls hanging out of windows... Is this something to be guessed at, though? Can it be identified with

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some area in someone's mind? The answer is yes, if it is experienced, and it has only to be expected to be lived, suspended in the air all around us. As I was going to say, this outward-hanging, ledge over the pitfalls of mankind, proves that it is something you know, not just as the tree is aware of its bark, but as something left with you on consignment. And it need not just be, it can grow, with you though not part of you, if you are willing to see it as reverting back to nature and not as the ultimate realization of Roman engineers, a stone T-square.

But how does this work? And yet you see yourself growing up around the other, posited life, afraid for its inertness and afraid for yourself, intimidated and defensive. And you lacerate yourself so as to say, These wounds are me. I cannot let you live your life this way, and at the same time I am slurped into it, falling on top of you and falling with you. At this point it is again time for forgetting, not casually so as to repeal it delightedly later on, but with a true generous instinct for ending it all. This is the only way in which new lives—not ours—can ever begin again. But the thought haunts me—will they be defined in terms of what we never were? Will the negative outlines of our never doing define their being, a repoussoir, and so enmesh themselves even more disastrously with their wanting to become? If that were the case it would be better to stop right here, in this room, only to continue breathing so that life might pursue its unwanted course, far from temptations of the future, yes that's it, so that in getting to know you I renounce any right to ulterior commemoration even in the unconscious dreams of those mythical and probably non-existent beings of whose creation I shall never be aware. I'm sorry—in staring too long out over this elaborate view one begins to forget that one is looking inside, taking in the familiar interior which has always been there, reciting the only alphabet one knows. To escape in either direction is impossible outside the frost of a dream, and it is just this major enchantment that gave us life to begin with, life for each other. Therefore I hold you. But life holds us, and is unknowable.

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They told this tale long ago
The legend of the children, in which they get closer
To the darkness, but go on living.
The motion of the story is moving though not
getting nearer.

They told this throughout all times, in all cities. The shape-filled foreground: what distractions for the imagination, incitements to the copyist, yet nobody has the leisure to examine it closely. But the thinness behind, the vague air: this captivates every spectator. All eyes are riveted to its slowly unfolding expansiveness; it is the magnanimity that creates this urge to emulate, like life, to grow, and it is the shapeless modest tale, told in the cottage at twilight. Progress to be born.

You know that emptiness that was the only way you could express a thing? The awkwardness around what were necessary topics of discussion, amounting to total silence on all the most important issues? This was our way of doing. Your body could formulate these things, projecting them into me, as though I had thought of them. Everything drops in before getting sorted out. This is our going now. I as I seem to you, you as you are to me, an endless game in which the abraded memories are replaced progressively by the new empty-headed forms of greeting. Even as I say this I seem to hear you and see you wishing me well, your eyes taking in some rapid lateral development

reading without comprehension

and always taken up on the reel of what is happening in the wings. Which becomes a medium through which we address one another, the independent life we were hoping to create.

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This is your eyes noting the passing of telephone poles and the tops of trees. A permanent medium in which we are lost, since becoming robs it of its potential. Nothing is to be learnt, only avoided, nor can the truth of this be avoided, but it lingers on like micro-organisms in the crevices. In you I fall apart, and outwardly am a single fragment, a puzzle to itself. But we must learn to live in others, no matter how abortive or unfriendly their cold, piecemeal renderings of us: they create us.

To you:

I could still put everything in and have it come out even, that is have it come out so you and I would be equal at the end of our lives, which would have been lived fully and without strain. But each of us has more of the vital elements than the other needs, or less: to sort them out would be almost impossible inasmuch as we are kept, each from the other: only the thawing nerve reveals it is time when one has broken out of some stupor or afternoon dream, and by then one is picking up for the evening, far from the famous task, close to the meaningless but real snippets that are today's doing. You understand we cannot casually borrow elements of each other so that it all comes out right. Force and mastery are required, they are ready in fact, but to use them deeply without excuses is a way of intermittent life, and the point was that the moments of awareness have to be continuous if they are to exist at all. Thus the sadness as I look out over all this and realize that I can never have any of it, even though I have it all as I in fact do. To be living, in each other, the perfect life but without happiness.

Well, this is what I get for all my plotting and precautions. But you, living free beyond me, are still to be reckoned into your own account of how it happens with you. I am afraid

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that you will never see your way clear through the velleities of the excursion to that other shore, eternal despite its finite nature, of happy acquisitions, suggestions and hints, useful, irregular: the exposed living that is going on, and of which you are a part, so that it could be said to exist only for you. You are too close to this happy state for it to matter for you. But meanwhile I am to include everything: the furniture of this room, everyday expressions, as well as my rarest thoughts and dreams, so that you may never become aware of the scattered nature of it, and meanwhile you *are* it all, and my efforts are really directed toward keeping myself attached, however dimly, to it as it rolls from view, like a river which is never really there because of moving on someplace. And so the denser moments of awareness are yours, not the firm outline I believe to be mine and which is probably a hoax as well: it contains nothing after all, only a few notions of how life should be lived that are unusable because too general. Nothing applies to your strict handling of how the roots should be lived, without caring about the flowers and leaves that may tower over them, a subsidiary mass, someday. Only the day-to-day implications matter for you. You are right, I suppose, but there was this image as it once came to me, of its brightness being together—not hanging together, for this implies waiting to be seen—but existing as smoke up around the bright levels of incidence and so on up into the sky, purified from being breathed in and alive from having lost life at last. Leaving rolls of experience and they happen further down too, are filling space up as they create more space.

Is it correct for me to use you to demonstrate all this? Perhaps what I am saying is that it is I the subject, recoiling from you at ever-increasing speed just so as to be able to say I exist in that safe vacuum I had managed to define from my friends' disinterested turning away. As if I were only a flower after all and not the map of the country in which it grows. There is more to be said about this, I guess, but it does not seem to alter

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anything that I am the spectator, you what is apprehended, and as such we both have our own satisfying reality, even each to the other, though in the end it falls apart, falls to the ground and sinks in. For I care nothing about apparitions, neither do you, *scrutinizing the air only to ask, "Is it giving?" but not so* dependent on the answer as not to have our hopes and dreams, our very personal idea of how to live and go on living. It does not matter, then,

but there always comes a time when the spectator needs reassurance, to be touched on the arm so he can be sure he is not dreaming.

We were just the other night leafing through some old declarations, nostalgic for the first crisp rendering of the difference, like an outcry, the difference between what separated us and what we were now going to do. How like children in the way of thinking that some beatific scrap may always fall and as time goes by and *nothing* ever happens one is not disappointed but secretly pleased and confirmed in one's superstition: the magic world really does exist. Its dumbness is the proof of this. Indeed any sign of activity on its part would be cause for alarm, since it does not need us, need to signal its clarion certainties into our abashed, timid, half-make-believe commerce of every day. So we grew up confident, in ourselves and in each other, confident that we would one day meet, strip ourselves of the real business of believing, preparing to live in the all-too-short night. And now these attitudes which were merely sketched on the air of the room have hardened into the official likeness of what we were doing there, the life has gone out of our acts and into the attitudes. So that we must despair of all realism now, because it is there, it is totally adequate for what was being represented, only we cannot feel it as such, but that is our tough luck. Indeed—is this really the end toward which everything was rotating? We wanted it to come out all right, and in the end

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that is what has happened. Others are sorry about other things. And we have the success of our gradual, growing belief in the importance of the universe as it came through to us to keep us going. Even the fact that there is no joy written into the ending, unless relief is the same thing, ought to be a comfort because it was recognized in the timid fairy-tale beginning that the happy ending was an artifice and that the happiness would be artificial, though real. Is it then that

we wanted the whole thing to misfire? to be caught offbase? or any of those myriad other expressions for failure that now come to mind? Is there something intrinsically satisfying about not having the object of one's wishes, about having miscalculated?

I can only say that the wind of the change as it has happened has numbed me, to the point where the false way and the true way are confounded, where there is no way or rather where everything is a way, none more suitable nor more accurate than the last, oblivion rapidly absorbing their outline like snow filling footprints. This despite the demonstrable rightness of the way we took, of our emergence into a reality that is perfect. Despite the satisfaction, endless as a sea.

You private person.

To every thing there is a season:
Today is cooler or warmer than yesterday, and it all works itself out into a map, projects, placed over the other real like a sheet of tracing paper, and these two simultaneously become what is going on. They can join, but never touch: such is the etiquette of knowing what you're doing, but they can get along in this way and progress can be noted. Your hair is fairer and your eyes are fairer. There can be no doubt you have out-

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lived that early confusion and that now the outlines of a somewhat less perfunctory maturity have been laid down. Too, those other eyes and your fragmentary awareness of what they observed have tended to merge with your own as the focus was adjusted, and now the target—empty but with a rush of promise of fulfillment—lies under you, wonderful, the air you drink in in great gulps, laughing too.

It is not enough that these go hand in hand, what is wanted is some secret feeling of an administrator beyond the bounds of satisfying intimacy, a sort of intendant to whom the important tasks may be entrusted so as to leave you free for the very necessary task of idleness that is a condition, the condition, of your being, being together. This is not so easy. And already something like envy is lurking there, ready to destroy the whole solid but fragile mass with just a push too much. The whole structure must be subtracted from harm's way. It is better to take in a third person as a confidante, but since there is nothing to confide... But how much more prudent to have begun the whole thing in a different spirit, manfully, crossing each bridge as you came to it, flattening obstacles... But there is no help for it and it must be remembered that the half-hearted, seemingly lazy way of moving forward is both the impetus and the nature of the work. It could have happened differently in no other world. And so tomorrow coming up is still a feast of expectation, is moving fast into the caves of your soul and this is the only way to have had the refreshment and the reward intact, in the midst of it all happening around you. There was no possibility of a bargain's being struck; it is offered this way and resumes its continuing in this way, in the clues to your personality. You have to take this as it opens up. There must be nothing resembling nostalgia for a past which in any case never existed. It is like standing up because you've been sitting all day and are tired of it.

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However,
the honesty of this approach is eased, not softened, by its situation in the self-propagating wind. The wind is now fresh and full, with leaves and other things flying. And to release it from its condition of hardness you will have to take apart the notion of you so as to reconstruct it from an intimate knowledge of its inner workings. How harmless and even helpful the painted wooden components of the Juggernaut look scattered around the yard, patiently waiting to be reassembled! Here endeth the first lesson: that the concave being, enfolding like air or spirit, does not dissolve when breathed upon but comes apart neatly, like a watch, and the parts may be stocked or stored, their potential does not leak away through inactivity but remains bright and firm, so that in a sense it is just as much *there* as if it were put back together again and even more so: with everything sorted and labeled you can keep an eye on it a lot better than if it were again free to assume protean shapes and senses, the genie once more let out of the bottle, and who can say where all these vacant premises should end? No, it is far better to keep this potential dry, even at the risk of having its immobility come to seem a reproach, the mute appeal of the saber hung up on the wall. If you don't start, you don't have to stop. But it is moving, though not moving satisfactorily, so that the reproach would be unjust. Why, its imperfections are just a token of how life moves along, haltingly but somehow always getting there in time, in our time. A cloak of somnolence, heavy and sticky as moonlight, translucent but imperfectly so (there are almost-transparent patches and parts that go under into darkness or some kind of unexplained activity—the whole is irregular, shifting, but up to its aim of clothing, concealing yet revealing). It becomes the state of present affairs—one of erect passivity, polarized through hesitation and love, the odd details resolved but nesting in their quirkiness, free to come and go within a limited area, a sort of house-arrest of the free agent intentionally cut off from the forces of renewal, obliged to spend a certain penitential time of drawing in and not utilizing those intuitions that gave wings, inspirations to fly abruptly out of

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the windows of the house to the stars. If the truncated halves could find each other again, and so on, and then the ideal parts line up, their order into disorder, strong and vertical in the spring night, the circuit could become perfect again. But their unevenness is precisely the snag in the realization of that perfect irregular order. They must disappear into their odd angularity for awhile, drift like the confetti they are until the appropriate carnival mood opens and they take fire like a haze of stars, ready to assume the light. In this scheme of things what is merely pleasant has to die to be born again as pleasure, and although it seems unfair this includes your outside view, openness, your penetrability and force to penetrate through outside agents that are merely the logical extensions of your inner decision to act and to bring this action to bear on the constellation of everyday phenomena. And so a new you takes shape. You can stand it at first. If the beloved were an angel, then this you would be the nameless spirit that watches from afar, halfway between heaven's celestial light and dull Acheron. But it is not necessary to sanctify the gods in order to live in the suddenly vast surroundings that open out among your features like pools of quicksilver: hours that seem like minutes, invitations to spend time with strangers in unknown places, no more disappointing orgasms, intentional symbols, gestures a time's stand away, the group's reluctance to fully celebrate anything new. For there is a narrowness too in this expansion that eternal waiting slops over into, helplessly, in which you see yourself as momentarily absorbed in some commonplace occupation, and then the late afternoon gushes in to support you, prop you up triumphantly in the narrow sector that forethought and carelessness combined have brought you to, monarch of all you survey and there is nothing mean or squalid in being deprived, the space is aerated, and just as the days get whittled down to more and more darkness at the end of the year without one's wishing to be back at midsummer, for this is somehow a higher ledge though a narrower and bleaker one, so time running out does not make this position less worthy or any of the individual instants of light darker. As in a novel the unmistakable truth of your

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character comes crashing through, having come to mean what it had been called on for, and meanwhile the tale itself, a bundle of incidents related to but separate and distinct from you, got up and did a dance and left. If a subconscious grievance persisted, a dream in which you try to catch up to me in the street, still with the same features, the glassy limpidity that both receives and projects the aura in which we bloomed and later shriveled (how could we know, any more than those insects whose life-span is a single day?), it is there only because it is natural, because "the public" expects it, to add in its own way a note of dignity to this wholesome, tear-jerking ending that is both a completion and the firm promise of a new beginning, first the ball of string as the kite jerks it across the field and then its shadow, fainter and fainter, with the idea of its all being continued somewhere, in some more fortunate time and place, but really: it's not a fairy tale, this time. It wasn't so as to play real characters in an age-old fantasy that we were combined: there is very little romanesque element, more the ugliness of waiting and the obscenities we think and speak, this is more like it, and somehow they give dignity and immobility to us in relation to one another. There are projections as we come to consider ourselves, but no vulgar forced entry or forced turning away: we remain separate forever, and this confers an admittedly somewhat wistful beauty on the polarity that is our firm contact and uneven stage of development at this moment which threatens to be the last, unless the bottle with the genie squealing inside be again miraculously stumbled on, or a roc, its abrasive eye scouring the endless expanses of the plateau, appear at first like a black dot in the distance that little by little gets larger, beating its wings in purposeful and level flight. I urge you one last time to reconsider. You can feel the wind in the room, the curtains are moving in the draft and a door slowly closes. Think of what it must be outside. Since time will in any case be reckoned into the final addition, it is not as though you need concern yourself. This is always taken care of. The whole thing is calibrated according to time's way of walking sideways out of the event, at the same time proceeding in a straight line toward an actual vanishing point.

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Already it has moved us, toward and away from each other, farther than we expected: the everyday glamor of a "personal life," keeping a diary and so forth, is the outward sign of this progression that is built into us like the chain of breathing. So there is no need to wait to be transformed: you are already. I am aware of it because I see you like a star, that mild, friendly and warming presence so many trillion miles away, and this suits me because I would have you only in this way: as you are, as you are to me. Therefore the major turn—third and last fateful step in the triad, already moving into something else—cannot be postponed, therefore there is no need to anticipate it, and it would be impossible to do this. But I know that my reasoning falls on the ear like "special" pleading, it too is in due season, and though all I really want to do is to call attention to principles, it is part of growing up to accept this new projection forward, and in this way we are to travel abreast, twin riders dazzled and disintegrating under the kaleidoscopic performance of the night sky this time, we too projected sideways in advancing like waves pushed away from the keel of a ship, rejoining in this way the secret of the movement forward that made possible this full-circle absorption of the voyage and its brilliant phenomena—each distinct and, however modest, of a certain importance in the hierarchy. Nevertheless storms do occur. It would be inconceivable for this progression to pursue its course unmolested, since it is a progression, for it not to be narrowed down to that special moment of grabbing you and shaking you mercilessly, nor that this moment become the practical meaning of the pattern of events, thus to be terminated "sadder and wiser," drawing the rueful lesson from experience, and yet it was an accident, wasn't it? Not just the part where everything went haywire but the whole thing, a series of accidents complete in themselves and as components fitting into one big accident? There would be nothing very encouraging about this either except that our shared apprehending of the course as plotted turns it into a way, something like an old country road. We can stop, we have stopped, we are stopping now, turning to look into the fulfillment that each unconsciously exhibits to

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the other, without wanting to especially or knowing too much about it. This possibility of fulfillment creates the appetite for itself, with the result that the dislocations come through to us as romantic episodes or chapters: "There's the one in which I fell away gradually, without even realizing it until we were already far apart, separated by new habits and preoccupations that had arisen even as we sat close to each other, talking about the weather and so on." To have the whole outline in mind yet not notice the individual changes as they occur, and then one day it dawns on you that you are the change, so naturally you could have seen it coming. A subtle corrosion has taken over this branching out, on a higher plane because the totality of its gradations had been breathed into the start, yet sinking deeper than that other that is cast aside because, whatever you might say of it, in the pattern of base voluptuousness it was perfect, a luminary, and things that are perfect of their kind are better than the flawed, interrupted spiral of that other narration whose purpose was to instruct and entertain, but which succeeded in doing neither because it was too turned in upon itself, and therefore suffered a shameful destiny, a chariot going down kicking and struggling at the first brush with the sun's deleterious rays. Quick thinking on your part saved us from such a melodramatic end, though: you merely restored the dimension of the exploratory dialogue, conducted in the general interest, and we resumed our roles of progressive thinkers and builders of the art of love. Not that such a thing could exist, or if it did it would certainly not be anything like an art, which can only exist by coming into existence, and then the rules may be drawn up, though it makes very little difference since no one will ever play that game again. It lay there in our already clouded vision as we looked at each other, some dark beginning force that made it clear that the time for action was past and the time for making speeches had come. So, somewhat stimulated at the idea of not turning back but going forward, making virtue of necessity, no doubt, we proceeded to actually examine what there was left for us. Not really, of course, but we could feel it as one feels the temperature dropping even though

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one senses only separate instances and not the movement of the fall. It was waiting for us: the sense that we must now put our ideas together and use them as steps for attaining some kind of rational beauty within the limits of possibility, that would not offend everyday experience, even of the coarsest or most monotonous kind. A prison, in sum, but disguised as a school, built on the false premise of education, that the boredom now would necessarily result in some ultimate note of improvement, though nothing resembling that magnificent but empty structure we had started to build incorrectly and had even begun to get used to despite its having remained largely at the blueprint stage. This was hell or worse, since there was no disproportion, no juxtapositions to distract, nothing but the day-to-day growth without change, no kind of manner in the sullen sunlight that trickled in, illuminating everything equally: a moral universe which the present had transcended but which was able to reassert its authority during the confusion that followed on its inevitable downfall and had now emerged stronger than before: strong as iron. In the very act of contemplating such a state of affairs prior to rejecting it one is caught up on the wheel, there is no alternative, and one finds oneself liking oneself and whatever it is quite as much as ever, more in fact now that a sure sense of purpose implements the drive into a definite thingness, virtue still from necessity, mother of invention, but its own reward. Remnants of the old atrocity subsist, but they are converted into ingenious shifts in scenery, a sort of "English garden" effect, to give the required air of naturalness, pathos and hope. Are you sad about something today? On days like this the old flanking motion almost seems to be possible again. Certainly the whiff of nostalgia in the air is more then a hint, a glaring proof that the old irregular way of doing is not only some piece of furniture of the memory but is ours, if we had the initiative to use it. I have lost mine. It has been replaced by a strange kind of happiness within the limitations. The way is narrow but it is not hard, it seems almost to propel or push one along. One gets the narrowness into one's seeing, which also seems an inducement to moving forward into what one

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has already caught a glimpse of and which quickly becomes vision, in the visionary sense, except that in place of the panorama that used to be our customary setting and which we never made much use of, a limited but infinitely free space has established itself, useful as everyday life but transfigured so that its signs of wear no longer appear as a reproach but as indications of how beautiful a thing must have been to have been so much prized, and its noble aspect which must have been irksome before has now become interesting, you are fascinated and keep on studying it. We have broken through into the consequences of the grey, sagging flesh that was our due, and it is surface enchantment, healing to the eye and to the touch. But there is no celebration of sensuality—there never could be, now—only of its counterpart, a temporary dignity for the mind and waiting, that is satisfying anyway because it is a kind of a way of being, any old kind but belonging to itself, in and of itself and ourselves. The "luxury" of details that coagulated into the old sad excitement told us so little, really: at most the secret of choosing the most significant ones to be put together into something to play that takes up time, a scansion of that tough anxiety, ordering without analyzing it. The rewards and punishments remain the same, each accepted in a spirit of weary gratitude regardless of its kind. Take them away and the lived space will not have altered, but will have drawn enough initiative from the drop in tension produced by the sudden removal of competition to expand its spark into a glow, suffusing but not illuminating it, and the mind's suburbs too are suddenly infected with the new spirit, commenting it each in their accustomed lilting or droning vernacular; in some cases it will take the form of clumsy removal of the barriers by force—a slow but probably useful process—in others, getting used to inhabiting the ruins and artfully adopting them to present needs; in still others, standing up in the space certain that it is the right one, and feeling the sense of its proportions leave your mind like rays, striking out to the antipodes and polishing them, perfecting them through use. One can then go about one's business unencumbered by nostalgia but still feeling the habit of this

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place where one has accomplished things before; it will change and you will go on thinking about it to your mutual satisfaction and joy. The fact that you did all this—cleared away all the debris so that the created vacuum would expel you forward into an exact set of conditions replying to exact demands —fertilizes each instant as it is born, increases and dies, spontaneously generating the light that flushes through the silver-outlined mask of your face—baleful silver and black, the enchanter's colors—so that the lines gradually become invisible and disappear in the total modest radiance that builds up on its surface and finally blends with the ordinary daylight outside. And gradually the whirring and catcalls, rumbles and high-pitched screeches, the daily turnips and radishes, the *Kraut und Rüben* take over and are as if they had never ceased to be. I alone know that you were here before, even though nothing here any longer bears your imprint.

The problem becomes more definite. Smiling as though for the photographer, pleased to be here since it was promised you and has now made up for the lag in getting around to you, you overlap once again with the one that thought you, sent you speeding like an arrow into this pleasant desert where everything happens agreeably at a sign from you, in which you are still solitary despite the magnanimous currents in the air around you like a humming of wings. Safe, out in the open, and ready to start again,

only this time toward no special goal, its sense having become generalized in the environment, so that you are already part of it, a little, as you prepare to try to fathom its warpless and woofless subtleties. But it is hard, this not knowing which direction to take, only knowing that you are moving in one, not because no rest was decreed for you but because the force that shot you here remains through inertia, and even while contemplating the globe of seeming contradictions that grow out of your present standing you have begun to evolve in that

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other direction not included by the archer, a present time draped backward over the past, the appetites no longer chided, full in the expectation of becoming belief but just as surely periled by the negative of premature ripeness that haunts the joyous wilderness like the shadow of the grave.

At a sign from you these spirits could be set free from their tunnels in the earth to complete the circle of the act which you would have begun in this way, giving ideas to local deities of place and river-gods to whom it might never have occurred otherwise that they might break open the one physical act they know and reveal the kernel like a picture taking place that is before them to proceed definitely into the future, sweeping aside all ifs and buts at the stately pace of a caravan disappearing into an undivided somewhere, all its secrets locked, swaying with the progressive movement toward and away from. But what is needed is some act other than pressing a button and having it all happen, some way of living into the layers as they occur and not losing momentum in order to strike

except that in your night no knowledge can be present without your knowing it, and hence can never inflict itself on anything else. The various segments of knowledge are by definition divided up and distributed in an equilibrium guaranteed by the nature of their existence, yet it can all be grasped and used quite handily when an occasion presents itself. In among the trees that occasion may be growing, be ready to pounce on it holding the muzzle to its temple as the veins bulge, but there is a sickness built into this act of moving: it can never take place, only approach a buffer area where negotiations may be undertaken; in this way it prepares its own downfall while never quite beginning.

There is probably more than one way of proceeding but of

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course you want only the one way that is denied you, the leaves over that barrier will never turn the sorrowful agate hue of the rest but only burnish perpetually in a colorless, livid explosion that is a chant of praise for your having remained behind to think rather than act. Meditation rains down on you to be sucked up in turn by the sun like steam, making it all the more difficult to know where the branching out should occur. It is like approaching a river at night, uncertain of the direction of the current. But the pulsating of it leads to further certainties because, bouncing off the vortexes to be joined, the cyclical force succeeds in defining its negative outline. For the moment uncertainty is banished at the same time that growing is introduced almost surreptitiously, under the guise of an invitation to learn all about those multiple phenomena which are our being here, since a knowledge of them is after all vital to our survival in this place of provocative but baffling commonplace events.

What was it we said to each other? We must have spoken to each other many times, but of these only the trace of the words remains, and the expressions of your face and your body

as you spoke or listened. Perhaps they are the most important after all, like a writer's style. But now only the sound of the truth as it is broken off from your mouth can kindle this apathetic valley that wants nothing better than to lapse back into the scenery of its dull vegetation. It wants to surround, because this way you will accept yourself as being here, in a place, any place, content to make the rounds you know so well, the philosopher's daily walk that the neighbors set their watches by.

You could then ignore the equal but opposed forces again building up in you, though not forever since their paths are

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not quite parallel and must eventually join in conflict, a tormented sphere of cloud you carry in you like a blind lantern. For the time being you can go on pretending that it is enough to listen to those inner promptings, the voice of the soul, until that fatal day when the look of the beloved flashes on you with its intensity of fixed lightning. That day you will realize that just having a soul was not enough: you must yield it up, vanish into the oblivion prepared for you by your years of waiting that all your practice of stoicism was not enough to seal off. And you know at last the condition of weightlessness and everything it implies: for the future, the present and most of all for the past into which you now slip helplessly, no longer prevented by the grid of everyday language, remaining in suspension in that greenish aquarium light which is your new element, compelled to re-enact the same scene in the old park, with snow on the ground and the waiting look on the faces of the nearest buildings, some distance away. All this in the interests of getting at the truth.

Little by little
You are the mascot of that time
You have your own life too
But are circumscribed by the time's growing concern
So that your activities are diminished
Or simplified, like a dog's.

Yet it was almost enough to be growing up in that city.
The taste of it, rationed through a medecine dropper,
Filled up the day.
In the evening the newspaper was delivered, ready to be read.
Darkness glossed over the imbalances
And the last irregularities dissolved in sleep.
That metropolis was like the kitchen of the world
And we were like servants, setting out on the task of life
As on a tour of duty.

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In summer our desires crossed
And were gradually veiled by foliage
Into a solid, bluish shadow
Yet one was aware of the living structure underneath
And sensed its pulsations at a distance
Imbibing the love as was meant
For it must be consumed
As surely as the appetite dies on the lips
And the guests move away in a chain.

So this meaning came to arise
Towering above the rest
With a place for each member of the family
And further up in the hierarchy
For every thought and feeling that had passed or would come to pass
In the finite universe defined by flocks of birds.
Simultaneously it was penetrable
And was being saturated by the direction of the journey we must take
Since it is before us helplessly waiting:
It must exist once the idea of it exists.
And so the meaning is brought down
To be with us together, never the same again.
We have passed through.

The aftermath of sunny days was a period so much like the first, newly-joined-together one that one might have mistaken it for part of an alternating pattern of planned growth if the signal hadn't been given right away in the form of a kind of fanfare of lucky accidents that drained the succeeding weeks of any suspense. There could be no doubt now that this continuing was merely another stone added to the haphazard masonry of assorted beliefs that was far from threatening to shut out the sun. And afterwards as the calm illumination persisted one could even go back to believing that this was the

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miracle, just as it had been in the past. Oh, nothing so very miraculous, just a feeling of being installed, as in a ship while it still rides at anchor on the bay, of having been led to the starting point and then proceeding a short distance, enough to erase any serious doubts as to the nature of the rest of the trajectory. And yet it wasn't the same, since I was a very different person by now and even recognized it. For starting out, even just a very few steps, completely changes the nature of the journey as it was when it lay intact and folded. That first step ignites the endless cycle of rising and falling; it is born; and one is aware of the still-invisible future as of a sudden pause in the conversation that one could have predicted but didn't: sure enough, it's twenty minutes to the hour or twenty minutes past, you say, and they all smile, thinking obscurely of how this pause might have been scheduled and where it has brought us. The days are getting shorter, in fact quite a lot shorter. And suddenly you have been occupied for some time with unlearning their rhythm, drawing sleep about you like a blanket, but the dotted rhythms persist and waking is somehow divided up among them. You forget the salty and slightly bitter taste of those morning dreams whose aim was both to mislead and instruct. For a while they can be put away and it is as though they disappear, and, faced with your satisfaction at being awake and free, you admit that there never was a day like this for getting things done, and action pursues its peaceful advance on the lethargic, malarial badlands of the day, draining swamps, clearing scrub forests, putting the hygienic torch to the villages, planting ground-cover crops such as clover, alfalfa, colza, buckwheat and cowpeas. This is so. Yet there are other books, stories of how it might happen: merely to imagine them is enough to set one's head spinning, and swearing never to open any of them does no good of course, it sets the hydra in furious motion, pullulating beyond the limits of the imagination. But to have one person's affirmation of the way it happens for him... Yes, but you do not know this person.

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He exists, but he is as a stranger for you in your own home. Just his being there beside you makes him a stranger because you can't tell how he got there. Nor can he, or at least he never seems to feel the urge to do so. So you are left with your blurred version slipping into mindlessness, but somehow merely being forced to focus on it brings it back, just for a while, but long enough to remind you that this happened before, and so on until a new occurrence important enough to eclipse all procedural questions and even to join you both in your singularity, reflecting each other's concerns for the first time and at the same moment seeing them vanish like Rumpelstiltskin, furious that you guessed the name.

At this point an event of such glamor and such radiance occurred that you forgot the name all over again. It could be compared to arriving in an unknown city at night, intoxicated by the strange lighting and the ambiguities of the streets. The person sitting next to you turned to you, her voice broke and a kind of golden exuberance flooded over you just as you were lifting your arm to the luggage rack. At once the weight of the other years and above all the weight of distinguishing among them slipped away. You found yourself not wanting to care. Everything was guaranteed, it always had been, there would be no future, no end, no development except this steady wavering like a breeze that gently lifted the tired curtains day had let fall. And all the possibilities of civilization, such as travel, study, gastronomy, sexual fulfillment—these no longer lay around on the cankered earth like reproaches, hideous in their reminder of what never could be, but were possibilities that had always existed, had been created just for both of us to bring us to the summit of the dark way we had been traveling without ever expecting to find it ending. Indeed, without them nothing could have happened. Which is why the intervening space now came to advance toward us separately, a wave of music which we were, unable to grasp it as it unfolded but living it. That space was transfigured as though by hundreds and hundreds of tiny points of light like flares seen

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from a distance, gradually merging into one wall of even radiance like the sum of all their possible positions, plotted by co-ordinates, yet open to the movements and suggestions of this new life of action without development, a fixed flame.

It was only much later that the qualities of the incandescent period became apparent, and by then it had been dead for many years. But in recalling itself it assumed its first real life. That time was for living without the reflection that gives things and objects a certain relief, or weight; one drank the rapture of unlived moments and it blinded one to how it looked from outside, and—well, that is what would have been necessary to give it the illusion of duration which would have rounded out those other essential qualities and given them a reason to live for each other. Otherwise their intensity evaporates from sheer effervescence, leaving you pleasantly dazed and sleepy—that feeling that comes after all great periods in history, whose isolation is such that they seem to promise more than even possibilities can give.

Behind this weather of indifference is of course a concern for the real qualities that inform our continuing to see each other about a lot of things. Luckily they are already there, maybe they are what it is all about, though probably we tend to over-esteem them because we had to dig them out of the earth and clean them off and shine them up. But they offer a pretext for looking into ourselves, examining the achievements of that easy time when an invisible agency caused the meals to appear smoking hot on the table, and afterwards you could take home the gold and silver dishes on condition that everything next day would have assumed its slightly guilty air of naturalness, for sheepishness and a little feigned stumbling were always the note by which regular progression could be recognized and furthered in secret, and its achievements, through exercising those atrophied muscles of content and disbelief, had readied them for new accomplishments next to

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which those of the lunar phase would pale. It's true that a lot of grumbling had to accompany this and even an occasional bursting into tears, but that is the cost that reality, as opposed to naturalness, exacts. The wheels, constantly getting mired in the mud, have to presage a complete breakdown which must even occur over and over again in order to lead back to the quiet but superior normalities of life in eternity. What have we done? We cannot see through each other, the way is closed. Each has to go his own separate way, comforted only by the thought that it could never have been otherwise, and that this way as we understood it was the true one, leading to pitfalls of self-defiance and to our ultimate downfall as individuals with a concern for each other and for the welfare of the group.

The change is not complete.
The new morals have altered the original data
Which have again outstripped the message deduced from them.
The phenomena have not changed
But a new way of being seen convinces them they have.
We must live in the way of their gradually getting out of date
In order to plot the new change at the risk of predicting it this time.
Hence, diminished strength from paying too close attention to the curve of events,
Trying to imagine in advance what we were never intended to know
Even as children, when knowledge was free.

And things decay into the pit left for them
By that greater happening as it is imagined:
Shorn of duration.
Just to be aware of the discrepancy isn't enough:
Knowledge does not make us happy.
It ought to be enough since

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We sat to receive it
Passive and mutually shy
But this was the way we had chosen,
The way that leads to understanding.

Condemned to stand still
We now understood what had happened, not actively,
Which would have been to live again, but we understood it
As motionless, having no live projection
Beyond the fact of the words in which it was written down
And these took on special meanings,
Rigid, but beautiful, like a stained-glass window
As the light begins to improve and sharpen it
Until finally we had grown up in that region without ever having left it.
Still, it was possible to imagine everything that existed elsewhere.

We were ideally free. We had reached that stage in our perennial evolution where holy thoughts no longer exist and one can speak one's mind freely, and the night shot back an answering fragrance: too far to the stars, but it was here in its intimacy that wraps one in permissiveness, leaving you free as it wanes to learn more about your special thoughts or any ideas you might have. It is never too late to mend. When one is in one's late thirties, ordinary things—like a pebble or a glass of water—take on an expressive sheen. One wants to know more about them, and one is in turn lived by them. Young people might not envy this kind of situation, perhaps rightly so, yet there is now interleaving the pages of suffering and indifference to suffering a prismatic space that cannot be seen, only felt as the result of an angularity that must have existed from earliest times and is only now succeeding in making its presence felt through the mists of helpless acceptance of everything else projected on our miserable, dank span of days. One is aware of it as an open field of narrative possibili-

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ties. Not in the edifying sense of the tales of the past that we are still (however) chained to, but as stories that tell only of themselves, so that one realizes one's self has dwindled and now at last vanished in the diamond light of pure speculation. Collar up, you are lighter than air. The only slightly damaged bundle of receptive nerves is humming again, receiving the colorless emanations from outer space and dispatching dense, precisely worded messages. There is room to move around in it, which is all that matters. The pain that drained the blood from your cheeks when you were young and turned you into a whitened specter before your time is converted back into a source of energy that peoples this new world of perceived phenomena with wonder. You wish you could shake hands with your lovers and enemies, forgive and love them, but they too are occupied as you are, though they greet you with friendly, half-distracted smiles and nods. The Hermit has passed on, slowly and haltingly, the light streaming from under his cloak, and in his place the Hanged Man points his toe at the stars, at ease at last in comfortably assuming that age-old attitude of sacrifice; the gold coins slither out of his pockets and fall to earth which they fertilize with many ideas, some harebrained, others daringly original. In the sky a note of fashionable melancholy has begun to prevail: it is the quick-witted devotion of Sagittarius, the healer, caustic but kind, sweeping away the cobwebs of intuitive idealism that still lingered here and there in pockets of darkness. The Archer takes careful aim, his arrow flies to the nearest card, the Five of Cups: "Trouble from a loved one. Trouble introduced into the midst of an already realized state. Amorous dangers. Perils through a woman." And also rectitude, for the aim was just. From the tiny trickle of blood from the wounded card a green stain grows; soon leaves shoot up and then tiny white odorless flowers, the promise of what still remains to be fulfilled. But of course since this was no shot in the dark it is an already realized state in its potential. The note is struck, the development of its resonances ready to snap into place. For the moment we know nothing more than this.

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But the light continues to grow, the eternal disarray of sunrise, and one can now distinguish certain shapes such as haystacks and a clocktower. So it was true, everything was holding its breath because a surprise was on the way. It has already installed itself and begun to give orders: workmen are are struggling to raise the main pole that supports the tent while over there others are watering the elephants, dressing down the horses; one is pretending to box with a tame bear. Everything is being lifted or locked into place all over the vast plain, without fuss or worry it slowly nears completion thanks to exceptional teamwork on the part of the crew of roustabouts and saltimbanques whose job this was anyway, and whose ardor need never have excited any jealousy on your part: they are being paid, after all. And one moves closer, drawn first by the gorgeous aura of the spectacle, to come to examine the merit of its individual parts so as to enjoy even more connecting them up to the whole.

All this happened in April as the sun was entering the house of Aries, the Ram, the agent of Mars and fire and the first of the twelve signs of the Zodiac, bringing a spirit of reconciliation and amnesty amid the wars and horror that choked the earth; a feeling of sacrifice too and bloodletting in the annual performance of the rites of spring. The pure in heart rejoiced for they were sure now that something terrific was going to happen. And as a matter of fact in places all over the earth where the ephemeral sexing was going on, the indifferent glances of adolescents scarcely accosted their elders, who were themselves too caught up in the excitement of the eternal tragedy to pay much mind. The Ram is imbued with tremendous force which can easily turn into shouted obscenities if he doesn't get his way, as sometimes occurs. He wants to go it alone, but at this time of year the populations emerge again into the arena of life after the death of winter, and one is newly conscious of the multitudes that swarm past one in the street; there is something of death here too in the way they plunge past toward some unknown destination, leaving one a

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little shaken up on the edge of the sidewalk. Who are all these people? What does it mean that there are so many? Is it possible that the desires of one might not conflict with the desires of all the others, and vice versa, or is it this imbroglio of defeated desires that is coming up now, a sort of Thirty Years War of the human will, terrible in its destructive surging that threatens to completely annihilate that life which it so ebulliently manifests? One stays like this on the edge of the throng, trying to think these things out. It may become necessary to shut them all out, with the light of the sun and the other planets, to retreat again into the hard, dark recesses of yourself where you know no comfort is to be found, but which are preferable nevertheless to this perilous position on the edge of the flood, looking down awestruck into the coiling waters that sometimes strike out and ensnare a parcel of land that had seemed secure. Surely there are things to be thought out, for the renewal of life poses terrible problems, no matter how fortunate in the context. At last there is the sense of destiny, the one thing that never could have happened, but even as its word fills your mouth you realize the terrible things that are left unsaid: what happens after that?

Something *is* happening. The new casualness had been introducing itself, casually of course, but suddenly its credentials lay everywhere. It was a new time of being born, looking ahead almost fiercely enough to be the ripe ear, and still keeping discreetly in the early stage of noncommittal promises. It was not the lily-pad stage yet, but there was buzzing everywhere as though the news had already broken out and was flooding the city and the whole country. The next day he rose up from that bed of reflective voluptuousness, determined never again to fall into the richly human excesses that his horizontal state had left him vulnerable to, having decided to grant a personal interview to each member of the enemy that blackened the plain as far as one could see in all directions. And the rumor strengthened with the night. In the morning they had all vanished at least as far as the nearest mountains

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and probably from the face of the earth. The Hanged Man knew this too, but in a lighter way. His pirouetting figure had been transformed into that of the World, whose secrets are not worth knowing, like his, but for the different reason that they are everywhere.

But a certain amount of confusion remained. Defenestration had become quite common. A lot of people stood around in public chuckling to themselves at not having doped it out before. It's so easy, really, so practical, requiring only the approval of the sky which has never yet been unreasonably withheld. Yet it bothered her obscurely. Why so much fuss if things were just following their natural course? Where was the glamor? Who was left to see it? But she decided to shut up about it for the time being.

Meanwhile he had taken the universal emotional crisis on his own shoulders, not from altruism but through a mistaken notion that things could be no other way, that riches would automatically result from the world's following its pre-ordained course. And alas, to be releasing the prey for the shadow at this late date was, no doubt, to fall in with the plans of the cosmos, but how faintly it echoed, how pallid the evening glare that was supposed to strike fear into the hearts of nations! There was no getting around it, the Moon had triumphed easily once again, Hecate and her brood of snarling mutts were always around messing up the place, and in the meantime the crayfish had glided unnoticed out of the water and begun its upward course, drawn by some baffling magnetism toward its mother, the moon, who places everything in a false and puzzling light from which a fraction of the truth is not altogether absent, for the moon does illuminate, though erratically.

Thus summed up, he felt sickened at the wholeness. Better it should evaporate into the almost palpable clouds of the night

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than sit around as a reproach for all that was never going to be, now, since it included everything. Begone! But the solid block just sat there. Little by little its mass began to grow transparent, like clouds just before dawn. It was noticed that this transparency was the same as emptiness. There were no further alterations, none being necessary. Men went about their business as they had before, a little more disenchanted perhaps, but on the whole not unhappy; there was a lot of life to look forward to and a whole new assortment of celestial phenomena as well. But the one of whom this is written remained motionless. Anguish had pierced his soul, like the lead point of an arrowhead. Everything had stopped for him. There were no new stories. Nobody invented things for him any more. He tried to remember what it had been like before everything had been canceled out, before the great Common Denominator had proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that $ax^2 = ay^2$, but the difference between now and the other hard times was that now there was no comfort in remembering scenes of past unhappiness, indeed he was quite sure there had never been any, and was therefore quite content to remain as he had been, staring uncertainly into the fire as though looking for a sign, a portent, but in reality thinking of nothing at all.

It is very early.
The heavens only seem to be in a state of ferment.
If one might choose to see them differently there would be
Peace at the outer fringes
For their reluctance is never far away
And harmony, by the same token, is never ruled out completely.

One can accomplish the thing quite quickly
And turn toward the ruled outside space
That defines our hesitations so majestically
Though negatively.

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It is necessary to go forward completing
The gesture from the beginning of life
That was worrying its shape into the trees
All this time, as though that shape were responsible
For the many fluctuating situations that fill the air.

Ultimately only one continuous bell sound
Exemplifies the crowding around of
All the things that need getting done.
They fall away like memories of the seasons.

There is no staying here
Except a pause for breath on the peak
That night fences in
As though the spark might not be extinguished.

He thought he had never seen anything quite so beautiful as that crystallization into a mountain of statistics: out of the rapid movement to and fro that abraded individual personalities into a channel of possibilities, remote from each other and even remoter from the eye that tried to contain them: out of that river of humanity comprised of individuals each no better than he should be and doubtless more solicitous of his own personal welfare than of the general good, a tonal quality detached itself that partook of the motley intense hues of the whole gathering but yet remained itself, firm and all-inclusive, scrupulously fixed equidistant between earth and heaven, as far above the tallest point on the earth's surface as it was beneath the lowest outcropping of cumulus in the cornflower-blue empyrean. Thus everything and everybody was included after all, and any thought that might ever be entertained about them; the irritating drawbacks each possessed along with certain good qualities were dissolved in the enthusiasm of the whole, yet individuality was not lost for all that, but persisted in the definition of the urge to proceed

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higher and further as well as in the counter-urge to amalgamate into the broadest and widest kind of uniform continuum. The effect was as magnificent as it was unexpected, not even beyond his wildest dreams since he had never had any, content as he had been to let the process reason itself out. "You born today," he could not resist murmuring although there was no one within earshot, "a life of incredulity and magnanimity opens out around you, incredulity at the greatness of your designs and magnanimity that turns back to support these projects as they flag and fail, as inevitably happens. But draw comfort meanwhile from the fact that the planets have congregated to haruspicate at your birth; they can no longer extricate themselves but are fixed over you, showering down material and immaterial advantages on whomever has the patience to remain immobile for a while, mindless of the efforts of his coevals to better themselves at the expense of humankind in general." Nothing appeared to give ear to these rantings and again light sank quickly into the low-lying mountains on the horizon like water into pumice stone, as night again erected with exact brilliance the very configurations he had been invoking, so that it might have seemed a sardonic construction put upon his words to anyone who had been there to notice. But the whole of mankind lay stupefied in dreams of toil and drudgery; their miserable condition offered no chance to glimpse how things were proceeding, no inkling that the fatal hour of liberation was advancing swiftly with measured and silent steps.

One day the thought occurred to him that it was still very early, if you were to judge by how few events had actually taken place and how many others seemed to be waiting around half-prepared to come into existence if the demand arose. It wasn't that any of the previous forms of life he had taken: the animalistic one, the aristocratic one in which sex and knowledge fitted together to screen out the intriguing darkness, or the others in which idealism—child-love or sibling-love—gradually twisted the earth's barrenness into a sense from

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which both libertinage and liberty in its highest, most intellectual sense were subtly excluded, culminating in the (for him) highest form of love, which recognizes only its own generosity—it was not that these seemed no longer viable, stages in a progression whose end is still unseen and unimaginable. They had not merely served their purpose but were the purpose—what population is to the world, that explains as it uses it. But it dawned on him all of a sudden that there was another way, that this horrible vision of the completed Tower of Babel, flushed in the sunset as the last ceramic brick was triumphantly fitted into place, perfect in its vulgarity, an eternal reminder of the advantages of industry and cleverness—that the terror could be shut out—and really shut out—simply by turning one's back on it. As soon as it was not looked at it ceased to exist. In the other direction one saw the desert and drooping above it the constellations that had presided impassively over the construction of the metaphor that seemed about to erase them from the skies. Yet they were in no way implicated in the success or the failure, depending on your viewpoint, of the project, as became clear the minute you caught sight of the Archer, languorously stretching his bow, aiming at a still higher and smaller portion of the heavens, no longer a figure of speech but an act, even if all the life had been temporarily drained out of it. It was obvious that a new journey would have to be undertaken, perhaps not the last but certainly an unavoidable one, into an area of an easier life, "where the lemons bloom," so that the last trials could be administered in an ambiance of relaxed understanding. You welcome these as an opportunity of definitively clearing your name, but are no less enthusiastic about the carefree, even frivolous atmosphere in which it all takes place—the sum total of all the good influences and friendly overtures in your direction, from which you have benefited intermittently all these years and which after periods of mutual discord have now banded together to create the impression of a climate in which nothing can go wrong, including the major question that revolves around you, your being here. And this is again affirmed in the stars: just their presence, mild and unquestion-

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ing, is proof that you have got to begin again in the way of choosing some one of the forms of answering that question, since if they were not there the question would not exist to be answered, but only as a rhetorical question in the impassive grammar of cosmic unravelings of all kinds, to be proposed but never formulated.

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James Schuyler

The Fireproof Floors of Witley Court

English Songs and Dances

Witley Court

In northwest Worcestershire
in eighteen-sixty
Samuel Dawkes installed
the fireproof floors of Witley Court

Put to the test in a fire
the firemen could not extinguish
the fireproof floors
failed to distinguish
themselves and are no longer
really to be trusted

Visitor to Witley Court
enter at your peril

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Below the Stairs

1

Anaemia, dyspepsia and ulcer
afflict the chambermaid

It's the damnable food you give her
"kitchen" tea
"kitchen" meat
"kitchen" butter

that force her
to indulge in
unhealthy "between meal" snacks

2

Brown and Lilly Bungalows
Boston Garters Simpitrol

The search for health and pleasure
leads to no fairer clime

Laxton House and Hamble Bank
The Grange and Brinkley Grove

How is it you got out so early?

Oh the missis bought a vacuum
and it do the work in no time

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In a Churchyard

Where droop the little ivy shoots
the sun slants down to kiss
the heaps of mellow headstones
brown and gold with tender lichen

Where soil runs deep and loamy
sturdy, unabashed,
singly, in pairs or in great batches
ever where the sun shall be their lover
daffodils!
who need slight wooing
to flaunt their winsome charms

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Hats

A cherry colored picture hat
of Tagal straw, its only trimming
a black and white big windmill bow
at one side, or in front

A shady hat in silver straw
the brim rolled up
and on the crown a clump
of blue wings from an Indian jay

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Frock

I love crystal fringe on a dance frock
and the ripple of light as you pass
in a plain little chemisette bodice
drawn down from your shoulder
by long heavy tassles that match
your tunic of pale rose-pink charmeuse

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What Ails My Fern?

My peonies have lovely leaves
but rarely flower.
Oh they have buds
and plenty of them. These
grow to the size of peas
and stay
that way.
Is this
bud blast?

What ails my fern?

I enclose a sample
of a white disease
and a leaf
of honesty
known also
as the money plant

My two blue spruce
look worse and worse

What ails my fern?

Two years ago a tenant
wound tape around my tree.
Sap dripped out of the branches
on babies in buggies below. So
I unwound the tape.
Can nothing be done
to revive my tree?

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What ails my fern?

I hate my disordered
backyard fence
where lilac, weigela
and mock orange grow.
Please advise
how to get rid of it.

Weeping willow roots
reaching out
seeking water
fill my cesspool and well.
What do you suggest?

What ails my fern?

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Wild Eggs

For her size the moor hen
lays a large egg
and many of them
and the eggs make delicate eating

By abstraction she
can be made to lay
more than her normal number
and her eggs make delicate eating

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Boer War Bread Strike

Over-sifted fine white flour
with little crust
and that not crisp

We cannot fight on this glue
give us the bread we are used to

Of stone-ground flour
the kissing-crust
the color of the rest
and baked right through

Bread for bread, bread
for the prisoners
each craving what
from his youth he ate
not the bread of exile
and that not crisp

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Procession

Serene and purple twilight of the South
the wind-distorted olives
so dim beside the road
so very still tonight
the sea delicately touches
the shore with foam

Black clad, glimmer of white
pyramids of trembling gold
up the white road wind
in misty iris blue

a cross, a crown, a spear

the air is drenched

the nails, the hammer

fragrance of lemon and orange

the scourge, a sponge

salt perfume of the sea

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Adverts

1

Ambrosia

Fry's Cocoa! the word
means food of the gods

So perfect, so peerless
nothing to throw away
more and more relied on

Fry's Cocoa! I repeat
there is no better food

2

Goodbye, Cheap Lamps

What fine lamps
these Mazdas are!

We were wise to say,
Goodbye, cheap lamps

And to heavy bills
for current, too!

Yes. There's no doubt
about it. So-called
cheap lamps cost
most in the long run

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In future we
will stick to
Mazda lamps
with the wonderful no-sag filament

That's what I
call a good light

3

Swan and Edgar Good Linen

We sleep on linen
we dress in linen
we clothe our table
with a linen cloth

Constant service
lasting pleasure
indeed it is
a royal fabric

Swan and Edgar
Good linen
Swan and Edgar
Good linen

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One Winter

Deborah Love

This morning the snow is falling again. It has already filled in the ruts in the drive. The snow makes me happy. Under it tired landscapes concede, errors disappear, and sin is borne under, the whiteness an absolute of infinite possible beginnings.

The baby is still asleep and I wander about the house looking out of the windows. From the kitchen I can see the fields, which go on and on like a vast white sea glazed by sunlight. A pattern of weather has set in. The morning clears and we can watch the spot of sun breaking the gray surround. By early afternoon it closes in again and the gray becomes dotted with white as the snow begins to fall. When the snow is falling the temperature rises as high as 20° but by late afternoon the sky clears and it drops again to zero.

In these warm interludes I take the baby out. She walks over the crust while I break through and flounder in the drifts. It frightens me to imagine I will not be able to climb out of my own footshafts. There I will thrash and make deeper and deeper the cave I am creating, while the baby crawls away to freeze and die.

And I myself to be found in the spring lying in the mud of melted snow. These thoughts are romantic, but not entirely. There is a neighbor down the road but the roads become impassable every few days. Sometimes it takes twenty-four hours for the machines and men to clear them. And often in the spasmodic storms of this strange winter, the electricity goes off, and even the telephone lines go down. Time enough to die.

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When the roads are clear and I go to the village I am hungry for my exchange with the grocery clerk. It is revivifying to have this talk with him. We talk about the weather here, and then the weather in other places; we discuss the food I'm buying, he advises me, I pay and go away into the frozen dream of the snow-shrouded days.

It is a lovely world. On either side of the road the plows have piled the snow in walls higher than the car. In this tunnel cut off from all impressions of the countryside, I am both frightened and excited. There is only the child to tell me I am not in a dream, or to indicate that I will not go on forever down a white tunnel filling the emptiness with images from my mind. Yet she may be myself, a chosen companion from my mind, her reality lost in a dim yearning from my own childhood. But there is excitement in the newness, and the danger of not knowing.

The road out from the village is lined by white trees patched with black bark. This windbreak stops abruptly as the road reaches the fields—there wind blowing unimpeded levels the ramparts made by the plows, and colors from the sky come flooding down across the plain. At the pond the dominant sky tone rules. Today it is dull wine; pink, purple and plum leak away into the snow. In this light and sky one is alive and quieted.

Crossing the creek that feeds the pond I look to see if anything is moving on the shore. Two gulls glide down the frozen water.

Everything is mixed for me. I see very clearly and at the same time can make no sense out of my life. I am exhilarated in this lonely waste and am desperate too. This isolation was not chosen and yet I did nothing to avert it. It came on as implacably as the storms that ride in from the northeast. If someone were to rescue me, I could get out—of this place, of myself. But no one will come here now.

I myself arrived with friends late last spring. More people came in the summer to live in the cabins or rented houses belonging to the farmers. I could have moved out with the others when September came, but the new season attracted

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me and the silence drew me.

I see no one except those who perform services; the man who brings the fuel for the oil burner, the plumber who keeps the furnace operating, and recently a man that I called to clean a heavy upholstered chair that the baby and I between us have almost ruined. I like to eat and read in the chair and at times miss the plate while setting down food. Although the man worked on the chair for some time, using different strong-smelling liquids, none of them seemed to help. He asked permission to sprinkle a gray powder over the stains and then we waited for the powder to absorb the offending substances. During this time he made an effort to amuse the child, showing her all the bottles and brushes, sponges and cloths in his case, and then he tried to teach her patty cake baker's man. But this didn't interest her very long, so he let her look through his things again, taking care that she didn't break anything. The powder turned out to be no better than the other cleaning agents, as he called them, so I suppose I will have to get the dry goods store to come and make a slipcover, and hope it will satisfy the owner. The furniture came with the house and I agreed to care for it.

Others come periodically; one man comes to change the empty butane tank for a full one; the farmer comes to plow my road, using a potato rake attached to his tractor for a scoop. He comes as soon as the snow stops, whatever the hour. One night he began at nearly nine, the lights of the tractor fore and aft shining on the snow that he was working. I watched each gesture of the machine which looked in the night like a great buzzing insect, its silvery feelers alternately waving in the air and probing the ground, grotesque in its square movements as though a primitive brain were laboriously thinking out each effort. The farmer was talkative but not respectful of me as a person living in the world. I could tell he did not take me seriously: as a being who lives rightfully an everyday life on this earth. He made jaunty remarks which meant nothing to me except that they made me uneasy. I, on the other hand, always spoke to him with great seriousness, admired his work and thanked him profusely as though I were not paying him.

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He made it clear that he was charging me less than others would have... yet he never made overtures, never called. Perhaps he thought because I stood in the snow and watched the tractor... ah! it gets too complicated.

Aside from these random events the days are as glass. With nothing to snag on I feel simultaneously that I am skidding down them to the end; and also that I have stopped, dead still, in the center of a clear distance. The distance is time. I hear and see, but the impression of a voice, a face, an object in the room is far away as though it is coming through time to reach me. It does not arrive because I do not wait and a new object or impression is on its way. I think it would never arrive anyway.

Only the child is immediate. I do not have to pinch myself, I have only to touch her. Because of her the solitude is of course not genuine. The child is company, a distraction as well as a focal point; at two she demands all my attention except when sleeping. It is society that I am cut off from. It makes me realize how much of my life was consumed in the daily confrontation of personalities. Now I confront my own. There is no one to save me from it. But there are means of escape, the newspaper for example. I can begin reading the newspaper at seven in the evening after the baby is in bed and at eleven discover I am still reading it. I had plunged into the print, sounding word after word in my mind, following the lines across the page, crossing over the pictures in the same flat way, until at a certain moment I wake up and come out of the sea of print. Perhaps the need for sleep brings me around.

Another thing I do is dream of travel. This happens especially when I am stricken by "cabin fever." The trappers overtaken in their lifeless cabins by the great silences of the far north go screaming off into the snow: I begin to dream. The best solution is to become as still as the surrounding silence. Who can accomplish this? Or else return to a style of life that will attenuate the demands that swarm through me. Here in this desolate place I begin thinking about other places to go. They are usually the same places... sunny refuges from the world, the south of France, Mexico, Haiti. There living will

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be comfortable and adventure overtake me. In between adventuresome highpoints I will enjoy the sensual pleasures of the sun. In the north the salient sense is sight. Touch, smell, and sound are minor, produced only by events. In the southern places of the world the heavy air bears smells and sounds in a drifting stream, their source unknown.

The palpable south leaves you waiting. The visual north keeps you looking.

And I am tired. I dream of a rich man and old—not too old—whose great joy is to care for me. He knows I cannot return his passion but still he is satisfied to have me as a companion with my little girl. We are on his yacht sailing south. Another day in the future I will meet my true love, but now I am resting with the old man.

From the edge of my reverie I see the depression in the snow fields made by the lane leading to our house, and for a moment or two my consciousness struggles between the yacht and the road on which I find myself. It takes several seconds for the new impressions to remind me of my whereabouts. The adoring old man had made me so comfortable.

I back the car and turn into the drive. Someone has been there leaving the ruts deeper and wider. I say to the child, "Look, we are almost home," and point out in the distance the black pines that hug the house; she is busy ripping at a box of crackers. The house itself is white as the snow and cannot be seen, but against the sky the cupola is outlined, left from another time and function. What it was I do not know. There are no clues left. Over the simple shed shape of the house dormers jut out on all sides giving walls and windows to the second floor. The first floor is a great cement hall at the end of which are the stairs. There are two small windows in this hall which affect but a small portion of the space and I always leave a light burning in the stair well. I think often of what sort of place this was. Perhaps a forge and the tower of the cupola let out the heat and smoke; or a tiny factory where the men sat at benches working delicate pieces with elegant small tools. Or it could have been a storage place for farm equipment. Later the space was divided horizontally making the living quarters above and rendering all but useless the enor-

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mous space below with its ceiling scarcely higher than myself. I have never asked anyone about the history of my dwelling although I'm sure any of the local people could tell me its probable prosaic past.

I am curious about who has preceded me down the drive. Several possibilities parade through my mind. 1) A special delivery letter has been brought out to me. But from whom? One of my parents has died and they have lost my telephone number. 2) A fascinating person who lives in the hills beyond the town has heard about me and makes bold to call. He is a mystic and wants to know me. 3) An ancient lover regretting our parting comes to seek me anew. 4) The principal of the school comes to find out if there are any school-age children in the house.

If it is any of these he has arrived by bus, one of those combination car-buses, which is sitting before the huge doors of the hall. No words are painted on the side to indicate its errand, but I see that the snow has been packed down by the wheels of the heavy bus going back and forth. There is now an area large enough for me to turn the car in. Afraid of getting mired in the deep snow I have always taken the car into the hall, made a sweeping turn, and gone out again into the two tracks I have come over. The baby loves this and shouts and laughs as we wheel around the dim corridor.

With the groceries and the child hugged in one bundle I make my way easily over the packed snow. The child slips to the ground and I unlatch the door and help her over the high sill. The grey light from the window and the yellowish light of the bulb have blended giving a density to the air around the door to the stairs. There is no sound. In the thick light the child looks misty and unsubstantial.

At the top of the stairs I turn right into the kitchen and set down the heavy bag. The child runs to the living room and I hear a crow of greeting.

At the far end of the room a man is crouching before the upholstered chair. He is rubbing at the arm. I remember then, the furniture shampooer. He has, after all, returned with the new cleaner he said he wished to try.

I feel uneasy. He is a polite young man, but I remember

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his eyes. They were like transparent covers over enormities of feeling, cauldrons simmering at a constant. I walk over to him and inquire about the new cleaner. We stare at each other. The child looks from one to the other and then touches us both, putting a hand on his pant leg and gathering in the other a bit of my coat. Self-conscious, I begin to speak, repeating my question. He says he can't tell yet, the application has not had time to dry.

The child and I sit down at the table and begin to work a puzzle. All the pieces are laid out. The shampooer tells us about himself. "Not married. I'm free to do as I please." Without looking up I see his head turn towards me. He speaks with pride about his independence, how when he tires of life in one place he jumps into his bus and moves on, shampooing along the way. Besides the elixirs of his trade, he keeps in the bus his cooking utensils and a mattress.

I find two pieces of the puzzle and show the child how they interlock. He turns back to the chair and begins to drench it again. Perhaps he is not so pleased with his life. Why is he still here, this of all winters?

"I was born here," he says. "I left Florida in October. I got tired of all the seasons being the same." The snow began in December and it is now late January. "I really don't know why I stayed on. Three months is enough staying with your folks. And God knows there's nothing going on here." I ask him what goes on in other places and think of girls, movies, bars, baseball...

"No," he says as if foreseeing my expectation, "the climate's different other places, that's all. It is a difference though, if you see what I mean."

Indeed. Haven't I said it myself. Here I am trying to save myself by investigation. In the South I doubt I would be able to enjoy myself. Here at least I take pleasure in thinking about pleasure.

"Look mama!" The child finds a piece that fits. "Is it going to be a dog?"

"We'll see. Look for another piece that has this color."

The man makes a comment about the child. "She is old," he says, "and speaks very well." I nod because he sees that she

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is privy to something we have lost.

He is going over the chair again. Although I think he is lonely, there is only so much that can be done on a chair. It is brighter but the major stains remain. I pay him five dollars and wait at the top of the stair which leads below.

He packs his bottles, cans, rags in an open wooden case and joins me. Facing into the living room as I face down the stairwell he begins to talk again... covering the sofa is expensive, he will find out the best place and telephone me; the weather: it must be difficult—the driveway without chains—no trouble of course with the bus.

Although I have not thanked him for having made a place for me to turn the car in the drive (saving me the difficulty, he thought, of backing down the ruts to the road), I stand silent. Grounds for sentences weaken. His face becomes wistful and the words trail each other emptily. The words speak of sofas and snow but the expression says why not? I am free and it is simple and outside is a cold and snowy world.

I turn toward the kitchen. He knows no more than I.

The child comes up wearing his jacket like a great cloak: "You forgot your coat." I heard him draw his breath in as he turned. "Oh," he says, "I forgot my jacket." He walks quickly down the steps. His footsteps ring across the long cement hall, and we hear the slam of the outer door.

It has become dark, the quick black of mid-winter. A three-quarters moon accompanied by a few bright wide-scattered stars shines on the fields of snow. There is a drip of water in the toilet and somewhere in the house a joint creaks. I have the feeling we are on a sailing ship under a slow and steady wind. The water slips by the hull with a regular slap and the masts creak in accompanying rhythm. From the windows the sea of snow is white under the moon.

Here I ride on an empty ship with no one at the helm. We move as the wind moves us, and from time to time I walk about the ship or peer from the galley at lights on the horizon. There is another passenger but she is the same as me.

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Alice Notley

I've meant to tell you many things about my life,
& every time the moment has conquered me.
I'm strangely unhappy
because the pattern of my life
is complicated,
because my nature is hopelessly complicated;
& out of this, to my sorrow, pain to you must grow.
The centre of me
is always & eternally
a terrible pain—

a curious wild pain—a searching
beyond what the world contains, something
transfigured & infinite—I don't find it,
I don't think it is to be found.

It's like passionate love for a ghost.
At times it fills me with rage,
at times with wild despair,
It's the source of gentleness & cruelty & work.

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2/16

I woke up remembered "It is a day"
& went out to make it
be a day
Bakery smell books nothing bought

Angry
try to think how I wasn't, yesterday
I don't know It's so filling Covers
all possibilities
streets skies
dimmed in light
distant somethings sliding by

If it comes back every day
how can I?
& I do & I will

to the end of 150 dollars & beyond
to when you leave more finally then you have
probably even to next Christmas

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The Comfort

I needed a long bus ride up-
town like a new hole oh well
my only comfort the possibility
you're unhappy, insane, etc

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Lewis MacAdams

To Phoebe Gone to Wendy

I don't mean to rank you out
as some kind of Haitian Sex Goddess
or Virtuous piece of Crescent trash,
the occasion never demands it,
but tonight I hate you, you lure me bitch,
and you are never precisely here. I love your friend
for taking you away, but I hate myself worse
for partially following, for the party demands a host
and I am the one
who skulks in the library
writing you a witless begrudged present
while you two in Boston
and these three in the kitchen
explode in a gigantic numbing flame
demanding my presence for purposes of Name—
the great exasperating pretense
I have been granted on occasion and used
to ultimately distinguish the world
now betray this world this instant
writing you previously constructed memories
and doing false management to bring you near

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Luxor

Herd fever,
as your face
incredibly washes away
a statue of an egg emerges
from the Honey Goddess

At last my moniker! No,
it is the coo of a witch I hear
tugging at my lame arrears
and floods and puke also
and dreams
executed by the dread other
half dead.
Proof, I said.

It is half life
There is honey in your harmony
There is harm here somewhere
foolproof, you said the

Lame blooms, you vex
She swore fever, not,
the serene,
the natural history
is of course severe
the flies are drifting
out of the colossus
to echo in the
craving for beer. Hunters
of sheep, discursive
sleep
the sleep of
monstrous flies

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whose disastrous shadows
enfold the
tongue
and jar the dew, these
Pharaohs drowned
their zeal in,

In the haze zooms
a recollection
my kinship
my flower burning
in you
as some guiding
principle sends my
penis sliding up your butt
in the chapel of Blue Amun

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Larry Fagin

Journey to a Star

Female flesh
Dissolving into artichokes
Exploding stars
Snowflakes
And the expanding leaves of water lilies
At the top left hand corner of a dark screen
A Latin American tenor
In cameo cut out sings
"Brazil"
Moving round the frame
And across a diagonal
Series of bamboo canes
Over
The S.S. Brazil
Arriving in New York Harbor
Passengers bustle down the gangway
Organ grinders' monkeys crawl through
Artificial palm trees
At the Club New Yorker
Across a tropical island
Set
Covered in yellow clad girls who whirl
Giant bananas
Or turn them
Into a banana xylophone
Carmen Miranda
On top of a wagon
In a hat and corsage
Of bananas and strawberries
Five feet high
With a cornucopia of bananas
Sprouting from her head
As far as the eye can see

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A child
Wears a metal sleeve
Electrically illuminated
Which dissolves into a succession of
Metal hoops
Glowing brilliantly
As they wind away into
A pitch dark screen
Accompanied by a sumptuous and exotic
Arrangement for strings
Girls
In mauve leotards
Swing the hoops
Above their heads
In an effect of extraordinary daring and beauty
Others slowly revolve
Polka dots
Like gambling counters
Pink green mauve white
As the figure of
A blue skirted girl is split
Into four
Refracted
Again and again
As in the splintered image of a kaleidoscope
Amber and gold
Snow drop and clover leaf
The color in its wacky patterns
Achieves something of the intensity
Described by Huxley
Under mescaline
Finally the cast emerge
From the center of the kaleidoscope
Singing
"A Journey To A Star"
Until the whole screen bubbles
With tiny heads

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Chris Peterson

Printing You

I print you
All the associations of
Print you
Over the blue beak
Print you
In the yellow calendar of goose-flesh
Print you
In the whirl and the tearing of drums
I print you
In the night when I am fighting with
White starlets with necks like geese
I print you there
I print you despite the word "osmosis"
Despite the radiant demands for
Fucking you, of titillating your bells
On the night when fish walk
I print you; I cannot turn
Away, I print you now
Like a word gone to sleep under bending arms
I print you, I print you all night
Over the boiling needles of the sun
And the camera grass and the scratching noodles
I print you at 50,000 feet above
The delicate wafer where I print you
In foolish language devoid of consequence
I print all over you
I print your chin on your eyes
And your leg on your cheek
Where I want to kiss you
Before the can
Before the streets and your habitation
Swallow you
I print you all over the jars

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When the kissing is over
And my head begins to sprout
In the whale's big mouth
I print you
Like a world waiting for a world
I print you
Like a dwindling fungus
Like a rain of teeth
I print you
I print you all night

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John Giorno

Giorno Poetry Systems

The great
central
icon
The great central
icon
which personifies
the ultimate
nature
which personifies
the ultimate nature
of enlightenment
of enlightenment

The great
central
icon
The great central
icon
which personifies
the ultimate
nature
which personifies
the ultimate nature
of enlightenment
of enlightenment

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Ho
Ho
in turn
provided
in turn provided
the Laotian
the Laotian
with a letter
of introduction
with a letter
of introduction
to his forces
in Laos
to his forces in Laos
and an armed
escort
and an armed escort
of 50
men
of 50 men
to help
him
to help him
get to
Vientiane
get to Vientiane,
the Laotian
capital
the Laotian capital.

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ANTIWAR
STUDENT
ANTIWAR STUDENT
lies
on the ground

lies on the ground
after
being punched
in the face
after being punched
in the face
by a construction
worker
by a construction worker,
then
kicked

then kicked
by man
at right
by man at right
in clash
in clash
during
financial
district
during financial district
peace
rally
peace rally.

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"I hit
him
I hit him
once
in the head

once in the head
and once
in the right
rib
flank
and once in the right

rib flank,"
Patrolman
Jenkins said
Patrolman Jenkins said.

"He ran
He ran
to the edge
of the woods

to the edge of the woods
and dropped
dead
and dropped dead
right
there
right there
by a stream
by a stream."

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In another
room
In another room,
a 5-foot
safe
a 5-foot safe
was pushed
down
was pushed down
a marble
staircase
a marble staircase.

The 50-year-old
safe
The 50-year-old safe
remained
intact

remained intact
but caused
but caused
extensive
damage
extensive damage
to the stairs
to the stairs.

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The hog
market
The hog market
at Chicago's
Stockyards
at Chicago's Stockyards
is closing
is closing,
and soon
the splattered
gates
and soon the splattered gates
will shut
behind
will shut behind
the last
squealing
tenant
the last squealing tenant
of this famous
way
station
of this famous way station
on the road
to the oblivion
on the road
to the oblivion
of the canned
ham
of the canned ham.

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Daniela Gioseffi

Poem

We want to see the Statue of Liberty giggling.
We don't want to see nothing but asses and elbows
and orgasmic smiles
from the East to the West of us!
We want to see that old statue put down her heavy book,
lift up her skirts,
and dance and fuck with us!

Acknowledgement: *Free*, Youngblood, Inc., N.Y

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Falling into Sand

Forests burn into their clearings. A sense of dread.
It has something to do with the flags of the age.
There are huge weapons, poison gases, insecticides
to injure us.
Who's holding them?

Yearning rest in the sea like a bottle holding messages.
One holds the secret future,
and we talk of the end of the world
as the dryest thing there is.

My mind retreats into the usual greenness
from which it seems born
in an Eighteenth Century Garden of Delights.
I explore the world of your body, thinking
it can make me free of mine.
It does for a moment.
We can touch each other into peace like a small revolution.

The anger of factories sends the day into smoke.
Minerals are asleep in their caves. Who should decide
to go into them?

If I build a fire at all entrances to the dawn,
I can kiss the red mouths of graves without fear, but
O that a book could be a nipple

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Alan Senauke

True Life Blues

Background

I am convinced that if I died she would be really annoyed. So when I realized this—that the "real" is actual and potential —I could swing both bodies at once. And one morning on the broad avenue I did and she was there. Her reaction—whirrr clikk—pure nonchalance, walking along as if she were totally somewhere else holding hands with a moth. The sheerest nerve can catch the smallest thought. Read on and learn why.

How I Live Now

There was no wind and my kids were laid out on the porch. One comes in, says—Can I have a drink? Cash and carry— I say and he lopes back to the porch, as far from the heat as he can get. Now that mother is gone those boys all sound like windmills. There's a lot of breathing done around here— most of it wasted. But *I* can't tell any more. Just about the time I think I am alive something steps up and sets me straight on that count. Like the way the trees are always falling on me and my family.We just want to be left alone. The subjective changes but never transcends itself. If she were not-dead and not-alive then everything would be objectified. All the dust would blow away once and for all. And those windmills would keep winding forever.

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Hilton Obenzinger

Numbskull, Inject

Numbskull, inject
At first there seems a placid lake
  on which
Aim high! Aspire nowheres!

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Bruce Andrews

Getting a Job, America 1970

veteran postage and were honorable if yes based on where do you wish along dotted cut post office box or print a campaign badge or service medal 5000-C through July 1, 1955 ex-service daughter who died in civil service appointment to use in item 4 your telephone not write in this space number during wartime has not remarried Idaho, Montana, Ponce de Leon Avenue inside the fold here heavy lines at perforations the same number on both answer copy to each erase errors you remove that please Spanish Sex of birth tentative Pitzer, La Sierra, Talladega to expedite our space by force or violence or other overthrow means epilepsy or diabetes of $30,000 or less give details in item 34 legal N.A. for Not Applicable it is IMPORTANT failure to anyplace credits in a multi-discipline program (maiden, if any) 30 w.p.m. made in good faith of your fingerprints an annuity signed in ink by blood or marriage in a juvenile court or computer-all other, intelligence (combat) soil conservation, old age satellites, etc. hard goods, soft goods, intangibles but refer for medical action

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The Parky

Barton Midwood

It happened just the other day. I can't sleep. The whole thing makes me sick and throws me into a fever. I work in the park. Pick up papers and various articles with a stick. About an hour a day I put in, when I am in the mood for it. Mainly I sit in the Office, as we call it, and chew the fat with Lennox and Henzel and sleep and nip a bit. It is not a bad life. But now there is this flood of strange types, youngsters mostly. "Buddhist riff-raff," Lennox calls them. But they are not Buddhist, so far as I can see. I don't know what they are. They come up from the sewers, I guess. Friday they had an outing in the park, thousands of them. The boys have long hair and beards that make a man want to throw up. The girls are pretty enough, but loose. I don't know what it is they are after. Trouble, I'd say. I looked at them, and looked and looked. And then it all made me so unhappy and I had such a pain in my chest that I went back to the Office where it is dark and cool, and had a whiskey with Lennox and Henzel. They are parkies like me, old timers. We are in agreement about the crowd.

"They are profane," said Henzel, who is a university graduate."

This threw us into a heavy contemplation. Henzel is a fine man. He could have been a professor. But he didn't want to. Fifteen years ago when he first came on the job—I'll never forget it—he said, "I have taken up a humble staff," holding up his litter-stick, "clothed my body in the rags of a civil slave and set myself apart from the social order. I will pick up their rubbish, gentlemen, but I will not bend my

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knees." I have never forgot that. He is a fine man. Some of the finest people in the world work for the Park Department.

We shut ourselves in the Office the whole afternoon last Friday and drank like fish. I'd say we overdid it, but the crowd was hard to bear. Now and again one of us went to the window for a look.

Lennox looked out, said, "They're playing guitars," put one hand on his chest, coughed, and shut his eyes. I understood what he meant.

"I used to like the guitar," he said. "My grandfather used to play the guitar. Classical Western. Never missed a note. A first-class citizen. Worked in the Customs. Go to his grave every year with a bunch of flowers." He opened his eyes, spit through the chicken wire, shuffled back to his chair and commenced to cough again.

Then Henzel went to the window, and tapped on the wire with his stick like a professor at a map. "They have renounced the past," he said. "The generations of the dead are as nothing to these ignorant children. They put me in mind, gentlemen, of the Israelites of old dancing around the golden calf. But where is the righteous, wrathful Moses? Where is the mountain from which he will descend?"

Henzel cut a fine figure by the window. I even thought for a moment he himself would go out and give them a piece of his mind and bring them to their knees. But he didn't. He fell silent like a stone and looked out. Then I went and stood by his side. It was getting worse. There were little girls running about with flowers—and all sorts of people—old ones, and middle-aged too...it made you sick. A lot of them had painted faces, and masks, and costumes of such an audacity that you wanted to run out there and strip them naked, all of them, and make them roll in their own filth so that they would see what was what and maybe come to their senses. All men die, that is the thing they don't know. And I die too. And is that how it is to be? Will they be dancing like that and making such obscenities of themselves when I am dead and buried and want a little prayer and weeping for my poor soul? It is a terrible thing.

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At six o'clock Lennox and Henzel went home, but the crowd stayed on. And I did too. I sat in the office. I drew up my chair to the window and watched. I ought to have gone home like the others. I can't figure how it was. I went without supper, and I was so empty, so empty. It got grey and it stayed grey for a long time, yes, and I could see the crowd thinning out, and it seemed that they grew quieter—which surprised me, as I thought they would explode and have a lot of shenanigans when the night came on. But they didn't. They grew quiet. I could see them moving about in the grey like phantoms. They moved slower and slower. Then I began to nod and fell asleep. Just for a short while, and when I woke it was a black night and the park was empty and still. There was a chill in the air. I felt better, easier in my mind. I put on my light jacket and set off through the park. I don't like usually to walk alone there at night, because there is always a host of niggers and hoodlums prowling around for mischief. And summer makes their blood rise and the murder rate this August is sky-high.

But I started to walk around. That is how it was. I *knew*, you see, that it was important that I walk around, and that there was some poor creature in the park who needed my help. I tell you, that is the solemn truth. I say there was a kind of voice in my head—not God—no, I don't say it was God. But all the same, there was a voice, and it was telling me, "Look around the park."

But I took my stick with me, just in case, as I have been fooled by voices before in my day, many times, and I know that though they often lead me to do the right thing, they often don't. Besides, they are never any help in a scrape. So I walked about through the trees, tapping my stick before me on the grass, and looking, looking—and then, after about an hour, I come upon a group of trees and in the middle is a young girl—about sixteen years old, I would say. She lies on her back fast asleep, with one of her hips turned, and her leg bent, so graceful, and the side of one knee upon the side of the other. And her mouth was open some. She had two fingers touching her bottom lip. She had long, soft,

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brown hair. Oh my God, and I began to tremble like a child, and I felt so ashamed of myself, and somehow it was painful for me to look. I thought I should gladly die on the spot rather than have to look too long. I went closer and shined my flashlight on her eyes—for that is the gentlest way to wake someone—and as soon as she began to stir I shut off the light. Then—it was a puzzle. I thought for sure she would catch one look at me and scream and run away, and I was terribly afraid she would do that, and sad at the thought too, as I had no desire to hurt her or to do anything untoward. No, I was trembling because I had so much pain to look at her. And I thank God now that she did not scream or run away. In fact she smiled at me. My first idea was that she was a lunatic. Because any normal girl ought to have been in a great hysteria at being waked up in the middle of the night, all alone, in the park, by such an old bald-headed creature as myself.

Maybe she was so calm because I straightway tried to ease her mind. I told her all in a rush. I told her not to be afraid. And I showed her my badge and my uniform—that I was a certified employee of the Park Department. I lied a little, too, to ease her mind. I told her my job was to patrol the park at night and keep everyone safe. I don't know if she believed me. I asked her what she was doing here so late. She said she fell asleep, and smiled at me in a crooked way. But I paid no attention to that smile, whatever it meant. Then I told her I would have to take her home to her parents, as that was my duty. She seemed to believe me. So we started off together toward the closest exit. She took my arm, and I swear I never even suggested it. As we were walking down the road, I felt somehow, though, that she was still nervous of me, and so to ease her mind I said, "Just before I woke you up, I had to chase five hoodlums away from you—two Polacks, a Colored, and a Jew and an Italian."

She smiled. I don't think she believed me, but she never said she didn't. Some people might say that I made up that lie to make myself big in her eyes, but I didn't. I lied only

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to ease her mind, and that is the truth. What do I want to be a hero for? I am too old for that kind of lie.

When I asked where she lived, she gave me an address in the Green Witch Village, which is where artists, bohemians and other such people live, if you can call it living.

"You mean your mother and father live *there*?" I said.

She said that they did and she laughed.

Then we came out of the park and got on the subway. I bought the tokens. She didn't have any money.

Some people looked at us on the train, but when we got to the Green Witch Village nobody looked at us. That is because everyone there is so perverted and peculiar anyway. Besides, we could have been a grandfather and granddaughter, except her dress was so short and she held my hand in the street until we got to her building.

"Is this where your parents live?" I said.

She said, "Yes," but she smiled in such a way as to let me know that they didn't really.

Then I said, "I'd like to come up and meet them." My heart started to beat and I had this pain.

She looked at me funny and twisted her mouth and asked if I could lend her a dollar.

So I did, I gave her a dollar, and she moved away from me and put her hand on the doorknob. "Look," she said, "you better not come up. Maybe some other time."

She ran inside and up the stairs. It was a very old building and when the door opened I could see how badly the hall smelled. I felt sick to my stomach all of a sudden and started to walk away but then I heard some voices calling. I looked up and saw the girl—Angela was her name—I saw Angela leaning out of the window and three of her friends were crowded around her and leaning out of the window too—two boys and a girl—they were all calling out to me. Then one of the boys said, "Thanks for taking care of my little daughter for me, Pop." They all began to laugh. They couldn't control themselves, I suppose.

The next day in the Office I told Lennox and Henzel about what happened. They were very interested and kept

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asking me over and over to describe what she looked like. It made me sad. I told them I didn't remember much more than that she was about sixteen and had brown hair. I didn't tell them her name. In the end, Lennox got steamed up and spit and said, "I would have raped her, the little bitch. Teach her a lesson once and for all."

I understood him. And maybe he was right. Maybe I wasn't hard enough on her and ought to have taught her some kind of a lesson for her own good. No, Lennox was right. She was an unrealistic person if I ever met one and will wind up in trouble some day. I didn't tell Lennox and Henzel about the dollar I gave her, though. It would have made them too angry. I can't stand it when they get so angry!

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Addled

Sara Spencer

The ridiculous "taxi" swerved clownishly into the driveway of number 29, neatly clipping a (no doubt) cherished bough of white freesia from its parent bush, the blanched and waxen bells evoking with their spilt perfume momentarily —but just momentarily—the sunlit riverbank of my childhood, with its cool ferns (mist, borscht, mother, midges) and rescuing from their lunatic perambulations my disordered thoughts, which, like so many crazed sheep, had been straying far from their comfy *ancien-régime* fold ever since I set foot on this ridiculous continent. What had I, Ludovic Putz, to do with this shady suburban street, its narrow sidewalks clogged with hooting children and suspicious dogs, its so-called "comfortable" white, two-story houses (each most probably with a box of colored "tissues" on the bathroom sink, and the inevitable toaster), sad parodies of our splendid, lost dacha in the pines. Dear reader, allow if you will a brief apostrophe from a morose and bewildered old-world rip. I am not, after all, *actually* in the pathetic DeSoto with its maniac pilot, but in the relatively peaceful confines of the Elmsville (not a real name, obviously, and certainly not real elm trees either) jail. Upon incarceration I requested pencil and paper from my oafish young jailer, who sidled back an hour or two later with a few leaves of aged municipal stationery and a barbarous ball-point. What, I repeat then, is old, sad-eyed Ludovic up to in these obscene surroundings? My quest was not a strange one—unques-

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tionably not worthy of its weird denouement. The kindly old gentleman who was in part its object will forgive me, if he should happen to read these lines—if, indeed, he should have progressed this far through the Lethean waters of my laughable prose, so alien to his own crystalline strophes—the peculiar celebration I am about to accord his name.

Piotr Petrovich, fat though you may be, you are the greatest émigré poet of our age! This dear, chess-playing behemoth was good enough (owing, I suppose, to a tenuous mutual kinship with a defunct cousin) to respond to my agitated request from across the water for employment in the spindly groves of American Academe (I will not bore the reader with the silly series of events which led to my decision to shake the dust of Europe from my feet; they are in any case, without an intimate knowledge of my character and essential good will, subject to misinterpretation). Imagine then, if you will, my delight at his promise of a lectureship in Serbo-Croatian literature at the very New Hampshire college that gloried in his strangely bloated presence. I said *mes adieux* to the spangled gutters of Les Halles, and after an unpleasant and (for me) humiliating week in the number six port-side lifeboat of the *S.S. Rotterdam* I arrived in New York. From there, thought I, it was only hop-skip-and-a-jump to Elmsville, New Hampshire, where old Hamblesley spreads her stone thighs to the subarctic sun, but as luck would have it I enquired of the wrong troglodyte at a palace of misinformation known as the Port Authority Bus Terminal.

And this brings us back, with all too precipitate haste, to the above-mentioned taxi. Its mutilation of the innocent freesia was, I am afraid, a direct result of my choked request, delivered a touch too late for happy landings, to "Stop here!" Please, if you will, my good madman. We had been cruising dismal Elmsville for upwards of half an hour in a search for suitable lodgings, since I felt that before making my debut at Hamblesley, I ought to change my shirt, sew on a button here and there, and generally indulge in that frivolous and singularly American obsession referred to as "freshening up." However, since it most inconveniently appeared from the

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lack of advertisement that none of the snug hovels we shot past were anxious to receive paying guests, I determined to fix on the least objectionable of these and implore its inmate for a temporary haven. I am not an unpleasant-looking man (deep voice, eyebrows) and I hoped, by these presents and by the assurance of an imminent and steady emolument, to coax the good housewife into letting me have a quiet room in the attic. I further hoped against hope for a garden, and it was the sudden, dizzying glimpse of an abandoned garden hose seductively coiled on the lawn of number 29 Breezy Drive that made up my mind. Better to fall to earth here than to spend the rest of the unfortuitous afternoon in a depressing albeit breakneck odyssey through the dim byways of what was turning out to be, in these old eyes at least, a completely uninteresting little burg.

After dismissing my Charon with a few coins—more than he deserved—I pressed the nasty enameled button on the modest portal of the "kitchen" door and was rewarded by a muffled alarum within, followed by ferocious yapping. After a wait of some minutes, the door opened and a woman of middle age, nicely tricked out in a pinkish, zippered wrap, stood before me.

"Oh, can you hold on a minute?" she smiled, struggling at the same time, in a kind of cute frenzy, with a blond water spaniel, whose smile, while just as broad, was not quite as civil. My Sieglinde backed coyly into the interior gloom; there was a bit of confused thrashing-about, the sad sound of canine toenails in friction against a polished hardwood floor, and the firm shutting of a door. In less than the promised minute she was back, one hand to her coif, the other smoothing pink linen, and *mirabile dictu* she opened the door to admit me.

"If you'll just hold on, " she said, employing for yet another time that intriguing Yankee neologism so redolent of frontier pep, "I'll get the clothes down. Aren't you a day early?" (Brightly.)

"Early?" I replied. "Madame, I am afraid you misunderstand. My name is—no, my good Madame, allow me—oh,

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very well—my name is Putz, and I graciously ask your good self if you would allow me for the duration of the semester or at least for a week or two, until I get my bearings" (here I ventured a friendly wink) "a room in your attic."

Madame had lost her pink smile, and having unaccountably refused—midway in the speech above—a kiss on the hand, retreated a step or two (all that there was room for) to the doubtless familiar security of the dappled lino counter. She was not a bad-looking woman, but that I thought, can come later. I could see that it would take a week or two to get her on my side, as they say. Something in her stirred me ... a vague resemblance about the nose and chin to my old nurse back in St. Petersburg? For the first time in many a month I relaxed and (probably a rash move) settled with what I hoped was an inoffensive awkwardness onto the shiny red saddle of a tin stool by the frigidaire. Kicking down the moronic footstand, I gazed in time-hallowed continental fashion into Madame's widening, china-blue eyes, their touching pastel canthi neatly pricked each with its little tear duct, and prepared to resume my suit. I was somewhat rudely cut off.

"You're not here for the old clothes?"

"My dear lady," I replied, aware suddenly of a frosting of the atmosphere, "I am by no means here for the old clothes. I am a Professor of Serbo-Croatian literature at your fine old Hamblesley College, and I am in need of a room. I apologize profoundly for this inexcusably succussive interruption in your daily pirouette from sink to stove to Bendix," (I may not have put it quite this way; this dear little ballpoint is really too playful) "but, as you have probably divined, I am a stranger here and unacquainted with the mores of Elmsville, as well as being, temporarily I hope, without a place to live. I noticed your garden hose. Have you a garden? I—"

"Hamblesley College???"

"You are unacquainted with it, then?"

"We haven't got any Hamblesley College!"

"My dear Madame, how can that be?" A darkling thought intruded. "Is this not Elmsville, New Hampshire?"

"This is Elmsville," (she seemed to be struggling for breath)

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"New *Jersey*!"

A terrible nausea swept me at this point. Perhaps the reader has experienced these moments of inexplicable existential despair, when the very sunlight filtering through the idiot panes seems quivering with the anguish accumulated over centuries of senseless beaming and one's head is abuzz with all sorts of vicious, half-articulate howling. I'm afraid I behaved rather badly.

"New *Jersey*!!" I cried, leaping to my feet. "Dear lady, you are either demented or incredibly unkind. How can this not be New Hampshire? An hour of rattling about in that infernally stinking omnibus—" but she had fled, and a moment later I was appalled to hear the door behind which her doggie lurked, presumably hot for my blood, being opened, and hard upon *that* the ominous growling of the hound itself. I made my way quickly out of that dreadful kitchen (slovenly bar of soap melting in its tin chalice, hopelessly cheery little dish towel, cookie crumbs) and down that misconceived street.

The rest is history, as any of you who have ventured thus far with me will be able to confirm for yourselves should you ever patter up the (composition) marble steps of the Elmsville Public Library and enquire of the presiding hopeful virgin as to whether she can produce a copy of the August 30th issue of the Elmsville *Weekly Gape*. On page 11 of this wretched sheet they have immortalized, although not in the most evocative prose style, my stealthy attempt to revisit the scene of my encounter with Madame *Inconnue* for the express and, I protest, innocent purpose of retrieving my skinny wallet and the redeeming Petrovich letter, both of which I had pulled out with the intention of legitimizing myself and both of which, in my eagerness to avoid the dog, I had scattered to the winds in flight. Her pig of a husband did not take kindly to my nocturnal entrance, which out of consideration for his good wife's apparently jumpy nervous system I had intended to make unannounced and unnoticed. Maybe someday they will come across that letter—the poor benighted fools!

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Bruce Andrews lives in Washington, D.C.
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James Schuyler's poems, *The Fireproof Floors of Witley Court*, were written for Paul Bowles to set to music. He has published a book of *poems*, *Freely Espousing* (Paris Review Editions) and a collaboration with John Ashbery, *A Nest of Ninnies* (Dutton).
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